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DISCARD

SPENSER IN
IRELAND

SPENSER IN IRELAND

ONE OF THE
TWO VOLUMES OF THE
SPENSER PAPERS
EDITED BY
JAMES SPENSER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
JAMES SPENSER

SPENSER · IN IRELAND

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PAULINE HENLEY.

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SPEXSER IN IRELAND

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

TO consider Spenser as a poet, to travel through his "realme of Faerie," sharing in the adventures of his heroes and heroines, be they creatures of heathen mythology, or embodied conceptions of Christian virtues, would be a pleasant task. The many enchanting pictures with their dream-like atmosphere, the matchless melody of the verse, could charm one to forget that it is an allegory, and meant to instil moral lessons. Furthermore, one might cease to remember that Spenser was not always the unpractical weaver of magic fancies, but could become on occasion the ruthless apostle of coercive government, the grimly precise exponent of the statecraft of Elizabethan England.

Few of the Poet's admirers care to dwell on this harsh side of his personality; there is an uneasy feeling that some apology is needed for the violence of his views on Ireland, and consequently, his political tract gets only brief notice, or an attempt is made to justify him by assuming that the Irish were indeed as uncivilised and as brutal as he paints them. The case from the opposite point of view

such writers neither know nor desire to know. Anyone who attempts to present that case they dismiss as biassed and unworthy of credence—a conclusion which leads such admirers as Dr. Grosart to sigh for an impartial history of Ireland, though that critic proves all too clearly in his own pages that Irish writers have not the monopoly of what he calls ‘animus.’ Some English biographers have certainly made an effort to weigh the case impartially, but, working as they usually are from English State Papers only, their knowledge of the Irish social system is inevitably faulty, and however sincere and honest they may be, their conclusions are formed from inadequate premises. When a nation is engaged in a desperate struggle for existence, many of the amenities of life are abandoned—not of choice, but of necessity. If a man’s house is burned over his head, if he is despoiled of all his goods, if he is harried and hunted from place to place, one can scarcely blame him for taking to the shelter of the woods, despoiling the enemy in turn and procuring food when and where he can get it. Such a mode of life was forced on many an Irish chieftain during the sanguinary wars of Elizabeth’s reign, but even such circumstances did not make them barbarians; on the contrary, music and poetry still held a place in their lives, as all writers of the period testify. When they were driven out of their country by the exigencies of the

political situation, the charm of their manners won golden opinions even in the most exclusive courts of Europe. It is well to remember that even in the sixteenth century there was such a thing as political propaganda, and that uncomplimentary epithets were mainly reserved for those who were actually in arms against the English, and such language is not to be taken too literally. Accordingly, though much valuable information is to be gleaned from State Papers, and from Spenser's own tract, both require to be read in conjunction with the authenticated facts of Irish history. "Every live people that exists . . . is jealous for the honour of the fathers who have founded its spiritual tradition," and if such a feeling leads the Englishman to defend his poet countryman, it should also enable him to understand the Irishman's resentment of the aspersions that that poet cast on the Gaelic system with its age-long literary and artistic traditions.

Spenser's claim to fame owes nothing to his political opinions. Of the thousands that have read his poetry, few know more than the name of his prose work—*A View of the Present State of Ireland*. For long that exposition of the gospel of savage repression had lain unpublished and forgotten; had Spenser been less than a great poet it might never have seen the light. Though he aspired to play a prominent part in the politics of his time, to be a historian and a statesman as

well as a literary celebrity, his influence in the land of his adoption was of a slight and transitory nature. If local traditions hold aught of him it is rather in unkindness than in affection, for although his cruel counsels were not adopted by Elizabeth they were stored in the hearts of a deeply wronged people, and some echo of the bitterness then engendered has come down through the ages in this land of long memories.

Edmund Spenser was born in East Smithfield, close to the Tower of London, sometime in the last years of Edward VI's reign—probably about 1552. It is unnecessary to dwell on the many impressions that would have been made on his childish mind by such a historic neighbourhood. The Tower, with its varied associations, its pageantry and its mediæval atmosphere, was bound to make a great appeal to the delicate imagination of such a child. His little games of make-believe, of knights and ladies, dragons and kindred monsters were played beneath the shadow of its walls.

His education might have presented a difficulty, for his family were in humble circumstances, notwithstanding that he claims kinship with a noble house, but his father being, it is believed, a journeyman clothmaker, the boy was able to secure a place in the recently established Merchant Taylors' School where Richard Mulcaster, a man holding broad and enlightened views on the subject of educa-

tion, was headmaster. From Merchant Taylors' he passed to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, which he entered as a sizar in 1569. To help him to pursue his education many payments were made to him during his school and undergraduate days from one of the numerous charitable funds then available for the assistance of poor scholars. After having spent seven years at Cambridge, he took the degree of Master of Arts in 1576, and left the University.

Spenser was now aged about twenty-four, without means, and faced with the problem of choosing a career. He had already shown skill as a poet, but the profession of literature was not, in Elizabethan days, considered as a reputable calling. In an age when the influence of the Renaissance was still strong, all the intellectuals, it is true, dabbled in verse-making, but that was the occupation of leisure moments. The serious business of life was to be found, for the gentleman of the period, either in arms or politics. When Spenser came to London at the instigation of his old college friend, Gabriel Harvey, it was not with the idea of making his fortune through poetry, but through powerful patronage. Here we leave him for a moment while we glance at the state of society at the time.

The England of Spenser's day was remarkable in many respects. It was in process of change—the full consequences of earlier Tudor policy were becoming apparent. When Henry VIII denied

the Pope's supremacy, many had regarded the King's action as merely political—an assertion of national independence. His daughter, Elizabeth, had little or no religious feeling, and she was indifferent to the innovation, except in so far as it affected her supreme authority in matters ecclesiastical. This she was determined to maintain, and consequently trouble arose with the Puritans as well as with the Catholics. The position of the Catholic body, however, was not quite the same as that of the Puritans. The Bull of Pope Pius V, which stigmatised Elizabeth as illegitimate, and released her subjects from their allegiance to her, angered the Queen, touched the national pride, and caused the Catholics to be regarded as enemies of both Church and State. Henceforth they were always looked upon with feelings of suspicion no matter how loyal they might prove themselves. “In the eyes of the Queen and her advisers, they were all strangers in the land, owing allegiance to a foreign power; they formed collectively an advanced guard of a foreign army which threatened invasion.”¹ This political danger enabled Elizabeth and her ministers to assert with a colourable show of truth, that nobody in England suffered death for the sake of religion, but that many were executed for treason. A reaction against religious persecution

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. III, chap. x, p. 348.

had set in, it had grown unpopular, and hence it appears in a different guise.

All Elizabeth's foreign policy was affected by the religious question, for in each of the Catholic Powers she saw a possible aggressor. Ireland, opposed to her government, and still more to her religion, kept her in a state of perpetual anxiety, for that country was certain to prove an ally to any invading Catholic sovereign. The Queen professed indignation at the possibility of assistance being sent to rebellious subjects, but she herself lent aid to the Protestants of Scotland, France, and the Netherlands, with the object of weakening her Catholic opponents. When Philip II in turn gave material help to the Irish she was roused to extreme anger.

Fear of Spain and of France, and repeated rumours of Popish plots irritated the English nation and kept men in a state of nervous tension till the defeat of the Armada brought comparative security. Protestants believed that Spanish policy was dictated by Rome, and consequently the Pope and Spain were the particular bugbears of the day, in the country where Spenser was born and grew to manhood. The Irish people, who were looking to both for assistance, became the focus and outlet for some of the angry feelings of the English. Unless these emotions that were agitating the minds of his countrymen at the time are taken into account,

it is difficult to understand the passion and the venom with which this gentle poet wrote of Ireland. Political rancour added to religious animosity is a formidable combination even in this more enlightened age, and can produce a violence and a want of logic that are amazing. We need not then be surprised to find that when Spenser turned to politics he brought with him all the bitter obsessions of his time, and was no more tolerant than the average Englishman of the sixteenth century.

But Spenser's England was not altogether occupied with religion and politics. The philosophy of the Renaissance, and the morality of the Reformation, had produced some remarkable results. The intellectual and physical restlessness that was abroad gave rise to new ideals and new aspirations. A spirit of adventure animated society at large, and often led to schemes that were wild and foolish. The wanton extravagance of the period fostered a craze for wealth. When one venture failed, another was started. Money had to be made, and it was possible to make it, if not in one way then in another. It was deemed laudable to rob Spaniards; nor was it considered amiss to enrich oneself at the expense of fellow Englishmen, when they refused to accept the state religion. Although it was the fashion to talk theology, scant attention was given to the question of ethics, for expediency governed morals, bribery and corruption pervaded

court and government, while the sovereign who was also head of the Church was indifferent to, if she did not actually encourage, the abuses.

For those who had neither the means nor the opportunity of indulging in the golden schemes of Eldorado and the like, there was Ireland. Fortunes might be made there too, and adventure was not lacking either. The Irish were alien in race, in religion, and in sympathies, and were ripe for spoiling. They were in addition savages, in the carefully fostered opinion of the English, and consequently had no rights. Thus it came about that many of the adventurous spirits of the day crossed the Irish Sea to make their fortunes at the expense of those whom the Queen considered to be equally her subjects, but of whose interests she was disregarding.

Spenser being, as he assures us, "noe martiall man," did not at first consider Ireland in connection with his future career, but if we are to identify him with Irenæus in his *View of the Present State of Ireland*, he came to the country in the summer of 1577. At this time, through the influence probably of Gabriel Harvey, he was under the patronage of Leicester or the Sidneys. There is no other mention in his writings of this first visit, and if he did come, what he was doing here can only be a matter of conjecture. The execution of Murrough O'Brien, which he says he witnessed,

took place at Limerick on July 1st, 1577, after trial by Sir William Drury, President of Munster, as that officer relates in a despatch to Leicester.² What the duration of this visit was we cannot tell, but it is possible that he merely came over on some special business of Leicester's either to Sidney or to Drury, and if he witnessed the execution at Limerick, probably he carried back Drury's despatch relating to it.³

In 1578 the poet became secretary to Young, Bishop of Rochester,⁴ the Roffin of the September Eclogue,⁵ a post which he does not appear to have held for long, as in the October of the following year, he writes from Leicester House to his old friend Gabriel Harvey, preparing him for a possible separation, as the Poet was expecting to be sent abroad on Leicester's missions to France, Spain, Rome, and other places even farther afield. Whether Leicester then employed him on the continent, or whether he was sent to Ireland, we do not know. If he went abroad at this period

² *Car. Cal.* (1575-88), p. 104.

³ Dr. Grosart on the strength of a statement made by Edward Phillips in his *Theatrum Poetarum Anglicanorum*, published in 1674, would have us believe that Spenser was then acting as secretary to the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sidney. But the paragraph from which he takes the assertion, and which he does not quote, has several inaccuracies, and shows plainly that Phillips is referring to the subsequent appointment under Grey. Spenser has no mention of Sidney in the *View*—an omission which would be strange had he served him as secretary.

⁴ Gollancz: *Times*, 28th Nov., 1907.

⁵ Grosart, p. 63.

there is no record of it. He was certainly back at Leicester House early in April, 1580. According to the Glosse accompanying the *Shepheards Calender*, which was published in 1579, he had been "for long time furre estranged." In the *View*, Eudoxus complimenting Irenæus on his exposition of "auncient historyes," says: "I see heerby how profitable travell and experience of forreine nations is to him that will applye them to good purpose."⁶ These references would seem to imply some actual experience abroad. They could hardly refer solely to his observations in Ireland.

But whatever he was engaged in up to 1580, that year brought a definite opening—his appointment as secretary to the newly designated Lord Deputy of Ireland. Sir Henry Sidney, who was a friend of Lord Grey's would have recommended him for the post, as the poet was certainly a protégé of the statesman's son, Sir Philip Sidney. The appointment may have been little to his taste, but nothing else was forthcoming. He had been to Court, met the Queen and her brilliant circle, entertained many hopes, but there it ended. He had found "what hell it is in sueing long to bide," and was compelled to embrace the opportunity offered.

It was thus this English poet came to join the band of adventurers and place-hunters that flocked to Ireland in Elizabeth's reign. He came to spend

⁶ *View*, p. 629.

the rest of his days in a country where a grim struggle was being fought out—no allegorical strife between giants and knights from the age of chivalry, but the determined fight of a brave people for their religious liberty and their Gaelic civilisation. Here where the Renaissance had scarcely touched, where the Reformation, an utter failure, bade fair to unite the whole country against the English, where the old traditions were still cherished, where the people clung tenaciously to their own ideals, manners, and customs, an English official with a sensitive poetic soul came to make his home. "Plunged into a life that but stirred him to bitterness, as the way is with theoretical minds in the tumults of events they cannot understand,"⁷ he views everything Irish from the English standpoint, and so both the people and the historical events of his time appear to him in a false light.

⁷ Yeats: *The Cutting of an Agate*.

CHAPTER II.

WITH GREY IN IRELAND

LORD ARTHUR GREY DE WILTON was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland on July 15th, 1580. Even in fairly peaceful times the post was no sinecure, but in the reign of Elizabeth it was a particularly arduous one, for the times were perilous, the Irish people were in a dangerous mood, and a foreign descent at any moment was to be feared. Elizabeth did not like Grey, and he in turn disapproved of the Queen's policy in Ireland, marked as it was by alternate repression and conciliation, so if she bestowed the honour unwillingly he accepted it in a like spirit. Grey had already gained a name for himself as a soldier, but warfare in Ireland was of a different order to that which he had experienced abroad, and many a goodly reputation had already been lost in that country, and more than one Lord Deputy had returned to England broken in health and ruined in pocket. Elizabeth was, as all her servants learned, a hard and ungrateful mistress, intolerant of failure, while denying them the means of success. Small wonder then that the post, withal it looked so magnificent, was regarded as a

doubtful honour, and frequently went a-begging. Well might Grey deplore the fate that sent him to "that unlucky place," but he could not afford to risk the Queen's displeasure by a refusal. Full of misgivings, forbidden to interfere in the religious question, hampered by instructions that ran counter to his own convictions, he agreed, on the earnest advice of his friends, to undertake the duties.

The new Lord Deputy was expected to take up his office with as little delay as possible. The country had already been two years without a viceroy. The Desmond rebellion, in spite of all the butcheries and ruthless cruelties of the military commanders, was still unsubdued, and to add to England's difficulties, James Eustace, Viscount Baltinglas, had chosen this particular time to throw off his allegiance to Elizabeth. Most of the Anglo-Irish Catholics of the Pale joined him, and new heart was given to the Geraldine insurgents.

Lord Grey left London shortly after his appointment, accompanied, it is to be presumed, by his secretary. They arrived at Chester on July 28th, doubtless saw to the arrangements made for the victualling of the six or seven hundred soldiers Grey was taking over with him, and next day left for Beaumaris, from which port they were to sail.¹ The *Handmaid*, one of the royal ships, was in readiness, under the command of Captain George Thornton,

¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 238.

to convey the Deputy and his party to Dublin. This experienced seaman was well known along the coasts, which he had "effectually protected" from pirates, and he is referred to as the "perpetual admiral" of the Irish seas.² For ten days a contrary wind prevented their sailing and, in the end, as Grey tells Elizabeth in the letter written on his arrival, they were "enforced to adventure in a very scarce one, or els make longer staye."

After a voyage of two days and two nights the vessel arrived on Friday, August 12th, 1580, at about four o'clock in the morning, "at the island of Howthe in the port of Dublin."³ When day dawned, the news was carried quickly to the city, and as was customary, the Lord Chancellor and the members of the Council, the Mayor and Corporation, and all the other notable supporters of the Crown, civil and military, rode out to welcome the new Lord Deputy,⁴ and to accompany him to his official residence,⁵ which was probably Dublin Castle. As they passed over the drawbridge and saw the rows of tarred heads set aloft on poles above the battlements, the newcomers must have heard

² *C.S.P.Ir* (1574-85), pp. 169, 245, 332; and (1586-88), pp. 2, 41.

³ *Lib. Hib.*, Vol. I, pt. ii, p. 4.

⁴ *Car. Cal.* (1589-1600), p. 221.

⁵ Sir Henry Sidney had transferred his quarters from Kilmainham to the Castle, but Grey appears to have gone back to the former residence, as his letters are dated during the second year from Kilmainham.

something of the history of the most famous of these foes.

It was customary to invest the Lord Deputy with the symbol of his office—the sword of State—as soon after his arrival as the ceremony could conveniently be performed. In the case of Lord Grey a difficulty arose, for the symbol was missing, its temporary custodian, Sir William Pelham, having taken it campaigning in Munster. Accordingly, the installation had to be deferred.

But Grey, in his anxiety for the safety of the Pale, was eager to march against Baltinglas at once, “which in deede,” he informs Elizabeth, “is so mooche the more perillus action as it is nearer the hart.” It must be remembered that the new Lord Deputy was quite inexperienced in Irish affairs, and in spite of the opinion of those who understood the country better, he decided to attack the rebel and his allies the O’Byrnes, in a deep and rocky glen in the Wicklow mountains. He watched the engagement from the level ground at the mouth of the glen, where he intended to fall upon the flying rebels as they were dislodged from their fastness. The result was the disastrous defeat of Glenmalure, in which a number of distinguished English officers were killed. Grey had received his first terrible lesson on the nature of Irish warfare. Most probably Spenser was in attendance, and if we would form an idea of the Secretary’s feelings on the occasion we

have but to turn to his envenomed attack, in his *View of the Present State of Ireland*,⁶ on Feagh Mac Hugh, a Chief of the O'Byrnes. This Irish chieftain, long a terror to the English, is there designated a "base villeyne," "a caytiff," and "a base varlett being late grown out of the dounge-hill."^{6a}

Grey and his suite now returned to Dublin, where he received from Lord Justice Pelham a complaint concerning the tone of the letters sent to him by the Lord Deputy's secretary, who neglected to address him in a manner becoming a Lord Justice, even though he was "to be unlorded the next day."⁷ This is not a reference to Spenser, but to some man of experience, for Pelham goes on to state, "And it is no new thing to him and many others there to see a Lord Deputy in full authority and a Lord Justice both at once in Ireland." From the *Book of Concordatums*⁸ we learn that a secretary was allowed £15 per annum for pens, ink, and paper. An entry in Vol. 92, 20 (1), *State Papers of Ireland, Elizabeth*, shows that such an amount was paid to Spenser for the year ending June 24th,

⁶ p. 659-60.

^{6a} Mr. W. F. T. Butler, in a note supplied to me, points out that though Feagh MacHugh was the leading man of the O'Byrnes in his day, he was not the chief of the senior line, who lived at Rathnew, and held the coast line from Delgany to near Arklow; hence the point of Spenser's epithets.

⁷ *Car. Cal.* (1575-88), p. 312.

⁸ Transcripts from F. I. Carpenter: *Reference Guide to Edm. Spenser*.

1581, and a similar allowance to "Tymothie Reynoldes, Secretary to the Lord Deputie." Appended to the entry regarding Reynoldes is a note :

Summe of the Allowaunces
to Secretarye aforesayd
cxvij. xs. (£117 10s.) ster.

If this is a record of the total amount paid to him for "penne, ynck and paper," as it seems to be, then he was nearly eight years in office, and must have been a sort of permanent official. It would have been obviously impossible for an incoming Lord Deputy with no Irish experience, to carry out all the routine work connected with his office, without the help of some official familiar with the procedure, hence Grey took over Reynoldes, who had been acting during Sidney's term. To Tymothie Reynoldes and not to Spenser would fall the most important part of the duties, and to him, most likely the complaint refers.

On page 32, vol. 97, *Irish State Papers*, there is another interesting entry regarding the Poet's emoluments: "Necessaries for secretaries and clerks attending the Lo: Deputy & Counsaile—viz: to Edmond Spenser ultimo Decr. 1580, X li et Junij 1581, X li = XX li yr." This £20 a year is evidently some other perquisite of office outside his salary.

The deferred ceremony of Lord Grey's investiture took place in St. Patrick's Church, on Wednesday, September 7th, 1580, before the Lord Justice Pelham, and the Peers and Councillors of the Realm. The pageantry of these elaborate ceremonials would have appealed to the Poet, for though he must have witnessed many a gorgeous scene while he was in Leicester's train, there were several quaint differences here that would have caught his attention. He had often seen English officials garbed in the extravagant fashion of this period when a man might "wear a manor on his back," loyal Anglo-Irish lords had frequently been to Court, but those haughty-eyed Irish chiefs, recently ennobled after the English style, and wearing their new hooded purple robes of state and the coronet of an English earldom, would have created a stir of interest. Silken robes, slashed velvets, coronets or plumed hats might be little to the taste of Irish chiefs, but to appear at a State function dressed in the native fashion would have been tantamount to disloyalty.

The proceedings opened with a religious service, and this being ended, the new Lord Deputy stepped forth, the Knight Marshall bearing the Sword of State before him. The Queen's letters patent were delivered to Mr. Nicholas White, Master of the Rolls, who solemnly read them aloud. The Sword was then taken by Sir William Pelham, its custodian

for the time, and solemnly surrendered to Lord Grey, who afterwards delivered it to the keeping of the Treasurer, Sir Henry Wallop. The Lord Deputy having taken the oath, the blare of trumpets and the roll of drums announced to all that Her Majesty's representative had been duly and legally installed.⁹

Had Spenser remained in Dublin, in this well-regulated city with its English atmosphere, the budding exponent of English policy would have had little experience of the cruelties that life held in store for both native and adventurer in this "salvage soil." Dublin, Sir Henry Sidney describes as "a place of more Delectation than any other in this Realme, and where I finde Health and Happines ennough for Ireland to yeelde me."¹⁰ It is true that little incidents happened from time to time to remind this loyal city of the state of feeling that existed outside, and that within a month of the arrival of Lord Grey the skies reddened to the glare of the destruction of a small town within a mile and a half of Dublin.¹¹ But, on the whole, life flowed placidly enough within these walls, and Spenser found a few congenial spirits among the Government officials, some of whom he had probably already met.

⁹ *Lib. Hib.*, Vol. I, pt. ii, p. 4; and installation of Lord Deputy in 1556, *Car. Cal.*, pp. 257 ff.

¹⁰ *Sidney State Papers*, Vol. I., p. 115.

¹¹ *C.S.P. Ir.* (1574-85), p. 250.

But Grey had scarcely been installed when news was brought that foreign ships had been sighted off the coast of Kerry. The expected Spanish descent ! Then the air grew thick with rumours ; the capital was threatened, there were fears of a general rising, and for several days no definite news reached Dublin. When it was learned that a mixed force of Spaniards and Italians had landed at Smerwick, and were fortifying the deserted fort of Dunanoir, the Lord Deputy set out for Kerry accompanied by his Secretary, and many of those who were to earn name and reputation in Ireland. After a difficult march by Kilkenny and through Co. Limerick, hampered by swollen rivers and a scarcity of food supplies, they reached Dingle by the end of October.¹²

With the details of the subsequent siege we are not concerned, suffice it to say that although provided with artillery, a plentiful supply of arms, and ample provision for six months, the foreigners surrendered the fort on the morning of the third day. They were all slaughtered, with the exception of the officers, who were held to ransom. The women that were in the fort were hanged, also an Irishman named Plunkett who acted as interpreter, a priest, and an Englishman who had served Dr. Saunders, the papal legate. The priest and Plunkett were first tortured by having their limbs broken by a mallet.

¹² Bagwell, Vol. III.

Walter Raleigh was, according to Hooker, the officer in command of the party that slaughtered the unfortunate foreigners. The soldiers got out of hand, as Grey acknowledges, and to add to the horror of the scene, the sailors broke loose from the fleet and joined the soldiers in the revelling, spoiling and killing.¹³ Local tradition says that the bodies were stripped and thrown over the cliffs.

This deed of blood raises a question that has excited much controversy. Was the submission of the garrison unconditional? English historians maintain that no quarter was promised; Irish historians assert the contrary. Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador in London, had it that they surrendered on condition of their lives being spared.¹⁴ Ugly rumours were afloat after the massacre, both in Ireland and on the continent, and *fides Graiæ* became synonymous with broken faith. We have, however, no direct evidence of a breach of faith on Grey's part. In his letter to the Queen, written immediately after the event, he declared that he told the Italian campmaster Alexandro and the Spanish captain that they could expect "no condition of composition" at his hands, but that they should surrender the fort and yield themselves to his will "for life or death."¹⁵ It is quite possible that there was some misunderstanding, as the

¹³ *Cotton MSS.* Titus A, xii, Brit. Museum.

¹⁴ *C.S.P.Sp.* (1580-86), p. 69.

¹⁵ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. lxxi.

negotiations were carried on through an interpreter. It is difficult otherwise to reconcile the surrender of the fort with the supplies of arms, provisions, and money that were found there. Men would not be likely to throw away their lives while having such means to defend themselves. In any case, "for life or death" does suggest a hope.

Whatever compunction Grey may have felt on viewing the rows of bodies on the sands beneath—and Camden says he shed tears at the sight—his Secretary pretends to none when reviewing the incident in later years. He defends the action of the Lord Deputy, and emphatically denies the oft-repeated assertion that the foreigners had been promised their lives. He goes further and even denies that Grey held out any hope to them. Irenæus, voicing Spenser's own sentiments, assures Eudoxus that he is in a position to give the lie to the aspersions on the Deputy's honour, "my selfe" he says, "being as neere to them as any." It is not quite clear what exactly he means by these words, as we have no evidence that Spenser was present at the interview at which the question of surrender was discussed. If he was there, his account of the affair is not accurate, presuming that Grey's, which was written at the time, and not fifteen years after the event, gives the true version. We cannot therefore regard Spenser as an unimpeachable witness. The discrepancies are worth examination.

The parley that Grey states he held with Alexandro the campmaster and the Spanish captain, Spenser gives as taking place with the Colonel, Don Sebastian, who according to the Deputy's version, only appeared when terms had been refused. With regard to their commission, Spenser says the strangers acknowledged they had none, "but were only adventurers that came to seeke fortune abrode and serve in warres amongst the Irish who desired to entertayne them"—a strange answer. But Grey expressly states that though the foreigners acknowledged that they had no direct mandate from the King of Spain, they asserted that they were all sent by the Pope—an admission that served but to increase their guilt in his eyes, their fault being "aggravated by the vileness of their commander," "one that neither from God nor man could claim any princely power or empire, but indeed a detestable shaveling, the right anti-christ and general ambitious tyrant over all right principalities and patron of the diabolica fede."¹⁶

Now if Spenser was not actually present at the interview he was only in the same position as those who spread the rumours, he had only the camp gossip to rely on, in which case he would have been "as neere to them as any" of those who professed to know what transpired. But it is worth noting

¹⁶ Cf. Grey's *Letter to Elizabeth* and Spenser's *View*, p. 656.

that the contemporary belief was so strongly against Grey and was so widespread, that Spenser acknowledging the existence of these opinions and knowing that they could not be lightly brushed aside, finds it necessary to defend the former Lord Deputy.

The foreigners being disposed of, Lord Grey and his train started on the journey back to Dublin, following, it is probable, the route taken by Pelham on a former occasion,¹⁷ down by the Lakes of Killarney passing to the north of Glenflesk, across Slieve Loughera and down into the valley of the Blackwater. Proceeding by Clonmel they struck the frequented main road to the Pale and were back in Dublin in the early days of December.¹⁸ The Lord Deputy would have liked to make a triumphal progress through Connaught on his homeward journey, but "the slack of the Pale" was causing him some anxiety. The experienced Sidney had warned him, when he was coming over, that special care should be taken to ensure the safety of this English part, "for a cottage burnte there will be made more here than a towne burnte in Mounster."¹⁹

On his arrival he was again met in the customary manner by the members of the Government and of the Corporation, and the guns of "her highnes

¹⁷ Journal of Nicholas White—*State Papers*, 1580, no. 52.

¹⁸ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 272.

¹⁹ Introduction to *Life of Wm. Lord Grey de Wilton*, p. 700.

cittie and cheffe chamber ' ' thundered appreciation of his victorious return²⁰—premature rejoicings, for the rebellion smouldered for two years more.

Until early summer Lord Grey did not journey far from the capital, and the secretary was engaged in one of his principal duties, collating and transcribing official documents. There are at least half a dozen in existence bearing his supposed signature.^{20a} It would appear that it was also part of his work to arrange for the transmission of the official despatches, as there is an entry in the *Book of Concordatums* of the various sums given to "Edmond Spenser for Rewards by him payd to messengers at sundrie times." These amount to £160 17s. 4d.²¹ During his term of office Spenser was paid by the Treasurer, for these expenses, a total of £430 10s. 2d.²² The fact that he was paid these sums by the Treasurer does not imply that he was other than a private or personal secretary. All sorts of people figure in the accounts of the Concordatum Fund, which was specially provided for the payment of any extraordinary expenditure,²³

²⁰ *Cal. Ancient Records, Dublin*, Vol. II, p. 155.

^{20a} There is no evidence that they were all written by him, in fact they are in several different hands. (Carpenter 31 n.) The copies were probably verified by him or his deputy.

²¹ *State Papers, Ireland*, Elizabeth, Vol. 92, 20 (1), quoted from Carpenter. This must be the amount which Grosart and the *D.N.B.* give as £162, and which the former says Irish historians "with their usual inflamed animus call blood-money." It seems a record of harmless transactions.

²² *Ibid*, Vol. 97, p. 32.

²³ Wood: *Guide to Public Records*.

and was at the disposal of the Lord Deputy and the Council. Grey's secretary, who had carried out these transactions on behalf of his master, would be repaid on the order of Grey. There is no record of a salary being paid him directly by the Government.

On the 22nd of March, 1581, Spenser got the additional appointment of Register or Clerk of the Chancery for the Faculties, in succession to Ludowick Bryskett, from whom he must have bought the office. In consideration of his being secretary to the Lord Deputy the fees customary on taking over office were remitted, and it was "given free from the Seal."²⁴ This was a position of considerable importance, and no doubt was proportionally well-paid. Thomas Fuller, in his *Worthies*, states that it was a lucrative one. The duties were to register the licences and dispensations that were issued under the authority of the Archbishop of Dublin. The office was set up under the Act of Faculties (28 Henry VIII, c. 19), which abolished the suing to Rome for licences, dispensations and faculties. The power to grant such faculties was given to the Lord Primate, but the faculty was made out by the Clerk of the Faculties in Chancery upon receiving the confirmation from the Prerogative Court, and after its being sealed

²⁴ *Lib. Hib.*, Vol. I, pt. ii, p. 29

with the Great Seal was registered by him.²⁵ There were two clerks, the Archbishop's clerk and the Crown clerk, as appears from the complicated provisions as to fees.²⁶ There was certainly a second clerk during Spenser's time of office—Roland Cowyck, who was appointed "in consideration of his age, faithful service, and losses in the late rebellion."²⁷ Owing to the fact that a secretary would attend the Lord Deputy on his journeys, the Poet was frequently absent from Dublin. It is probable that during the time that Grey spent in Ireland, Spenser had a deputy in his office of the Chancery. A substitute was allowed him.²⁸ As part of his secretarial duties presumably, he appeared in person in the Court of Exchequer in Dublin on the 6th of May, 1581.²⁹

When the dry weather and brighter days made longer journeys practicable, the Lord Deputy undertook an expedition to Wexford against the Kavanaghs. He travelled through Wicklow by

²⁵ Wood, p. 58.

²⁶ If the tax were £4 or over, the clerk seems to have got ($\frac{1}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{3}$) + ($\frac{1}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{3}$) of it for his pains. Other provisions were made if the tax were less than £4.

²⁷ *Lib. Hib.* He presented a petition to the Queen in 1581, and again in 1582, and in consequence by Patent, dated March 14th, 1584, in addition to being Clerk of the Chancery for the Faculties, he was made "our sole Register for all manner of Appeales Ecclesiastical." Perhaps it is owing to this appointment that C. L. Falkiner in his essay on Spenser (p. 13, note) says that the above two offices, constituted as separate positions under the Act, were in practice amalgamated in the one person.

²⁸ Transcript from Harl. MS. 4107 (F. I. Carpenter).

²⁹ Grosart, p. 142.

way of Castle Kevin.³⁰ In July he was back in Dublin again, but only for a short time, as events in the north called him to the Blackwater to deal with Turlough Luinagh O'Neill. Having negotiated matters satisfactorily, he returned to Dublin, but only to prepare for his journey into Munster. It will be noted that Spenser speaks in detail, in the *View*, of those parts of the country where we presume he travelled in company with the Lord Deputy. His scanty knowledge of Connaught would imply that he never visited that province.

In September Grey and his suite left for the Munster journey. They took the main road through Naas, Castledermot, Gowran, and on to Waterford, whence they proceeded by Dungarvan, Lismore and Youghal to Cork. They marched up the country to Limerick, returning thence to Dublin.³¹ Spenser's name appears again in the Treasurer's accounts for this time. Colonel John Zouche, the military commander in the south, was paid £32 "per bill due to Edmond Spenser."³²

The condition of Munster at this period was, according to all descriptions, frightful beyond imagination. The herds had been swept away, the ground had not been tilled, and famine came to devour what the sword had left.³³ Warham St.

³⁰ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), pp. 305, 306, 307.

³¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 327; Murdin, p. 363-4.

³² *State Papers, Ireland*, Vol. 97, p. 17. (Carpenter.)

³³ Froude, Vol. XI, chap. xxvii

Leger, writing from Cork in March, 1582, says that numbers of poor innocent people had died of famine, "not so few as 30,000 at the least within less than half a year." He disapproved of Grey's policy of laying waste the five counties of the province of Munster, as the English would lose more than would be gained by it.³⁴ But the Lord Deputy favoured the harshest measures and most unsparing repression, and he hanged or slaughtered those whom the famine spared.

Accounts of the appalling ruin of "this most riche and plentiful countrey full of corne and cattell" are many, but no one draws a more harrowing picture than the secretary who looked on the scene with the eye of a poet. Even after the lapse of about fourteen years he is still haunted by the memory. "Out of every corner of the woodes and glinnes they came creeping foorth upon theyr handes, for theyr legges could not bear them; they looked like anatomyes of death, they spake like ghostes crying out of theyr graves; they did eat of the dead carrions, happy they yf they could finde them, yea and one another soone after, insoemuch as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of theyr graves; and yf they founde a plott of water-cresses or sham-rokes, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue therewithall, that in short space there were none almost left,

³⁴ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. lxxxv—lxxxvi.

and a most populous and plentiful countrey suddaynly made voyde of man or beast : yet sure in all that warre there perished not many by the swoorde, but by the extremity of famine which they themselves had wrought."

"Any stonye heart would have rued the same," but Spenser far from ruing it, proposed later on to repeat the performance in the north, as the most convenient way of disposing of Hugh O'Neill's adherents. Famine being created by definite methods "they would quickly consume themselves and devour one another." So had a gentle poet developed under the tutelage of Lord Grey, "that good Lord blotted with the name of a bloudy man, who that well knewe, knewe him to be most gentell, affable, loving and temperate." It is quite probable that in private life the Deputy was mild and amiable, and certainly Spenser seems to have found him a kind and considerate master, who secured for his secretary a share of the benefits within his gift. When Lord Grey was recalled, Spenser was independent of the Deputy's fortunes.

Among the prizes that fell to the lot of the English officials in Ireland were the dissolved monasteries. In the July of 1581 the Poet began to take a share in the spoils. He acquired a lease of the abbey and castle and manor of Enniscorthy in the County of Wexford, but sold it again on December 9th to Richard Synot, who later transferred it to the

Treasurer, Sir Henry Wallop.³⁵ The purchase money was invested in the dissolved monastery of St. Augustine's at New Ross, which he bought from Lord Mountgarret. This was also disposed of in a short time to Sir Anthony Colclough.³⁶

Grey gave to his secretary part of the forfeited estates which his enemies accused him of bestowing on his favourites. "He giveth largely to his men," it was said.³⁷ Spenser's name figures on the list which the Lord Deputy was obliged to send to London in January, 1582, in answer to this charge—"the lease of a house in Dublin belonging to Baltinglas, for six years to come, unto Edmund Spenser, one of the Lord Deputies Secretaries valued at 5l" and "a custodiam of John Eustaces land of the Newland to Edmund Spenser one of the Lord Deputies Secretaries."³⁸

On the 24th of August of the same year, Edmund Spenser got by letters patent "the dissolved house of Friars Minors, called the New Abbey, Co. Kildare, with appurtenances, also an old waste town adjoining and its appurtenances, in the Queen's disposition by the rebellion of James Eustace. To hold for 21 years at a rent of £3 yearly."³⁹ This

³⁵ *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Ireland*, Vol. ccxiv, p. 319; *Revenue Book*, Exchequer Record Office, Dublin; *Fiants*, Eliz., nos. 5963 and 3785.

³⁶ Chancery Bill, *Perregreene Spenser v. Francis Marshall*. 1622.

³⁷ *C.S.P. Ir.* (1574-85), p. 389.

³⁸ *C.S.P. Ir.* (1574-85), p. 344.

³⁹ *Fiants*, Eliz., no. 3969.

monastery was commenced on the bank of the Liffey in 1486, according to the *Four Masters*, by Roland, son of Sir Edward Eustace. It was suppressed in 1539, and given back to Lord Baltinglas. This property being more convenient to Dublin than the previous grants in Co. Wexford, the Poet kept it for some time. Grey was recalled this same month, and Spenser seems to have passed at least a portion of his new-found leisure in Co. Kildare, as for the next two years he is officially described as of New Abbey. In addition to the monastery itself there was a burial ground, an orchard, a garden and a small paddock for pasture containing 8 acres.⁴⁰ Scarcely a trace of the old monastery is now to be found, but the churchyard still exists about half a mile from Kilcullen Bridge.

While the Poet was in possession of this property he acted as Commissioner of musters for the county in May, 1583, and again on July 4th, 1584,⁴¹ which proves that he did not return to England with Grey, but continued to reside in Ireland. It is possible that he now attended in person to his duties in the Chancery.

Lord Grey on his arrival in London was not received with favour in Court circles, but his recall does not seem to have been absolutely certain, at any rate it was not made public,⁴² for fear of the

⁴⁰ Ronan : *Reformation in Dublin*, p. 232.

⁴¹ Fiants, nos. 4150 and 4464.

⁴² Birch's *Memoirs*, Vol. I, p. 24.

effect in Ireland, though the Deputy complained before leaving the country that all the rebels knew of it.⁴³ As late as October 26th, the matter of his return was still the subject of speculation, but his recall was officially announced at the beginning of November.⁴⁴ He was a failure. It was vain for him to plead the state of Ireland when he went there, and his services during his term of office. What were "1,485 chief men and gentlemen slain, not accounting those of meaner sort, nor yet executions by law and killing of churls, which were innumerable,"⁴⁵ to an angry avaricious Queen who was losing heavily by these Irish wars? The receivers of taxes were reporting that in the place of the ordinary revenue reaching, as it did before the war, some £70,000, they could not count upon gathering more than £10,000, if the war were to continue.⁴⁶ The net result of Grey's administration was that he had spent more, gained less than any Lord Deputy before, and quite alienated the Irish from the Queen.⁴⁷ It was represented at the Court "that he was a bloudye man, and regarded not the life of her [the Queen's] subjects noe more than dogges, but had wasted and consumed all, soe as nowe she had nothing almost left, but to raigne in theyr

⁴³ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 385.

⁴⁴ *MSS. of Duke of Rutland*, Vol. I, p. 143.

⁴⁵ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85).

⁴⁶ *C.S.P.Sp.* (1580-86), p. 319.

⁴⁷ *C.S.P.Sp.* (1581-86), p. 319.

ashes.’’⁴⁸ Before leaving Ireland Grey had complained that there was no cause for Burghley to join the ranks of his enemies and to be “so heavy against him,” but the Treasurer disapproved of his methods, and if report speaks truly, had bluntly informed him in presence of Elizabeth, that he might consider himself fortunate in that he was not serving her Majesty’s father, when he would have paid with his head for what he had done.⁴⁹ It was decided to try conciliation again.

All these happenings the ex-Secretary, who apparently enjoyed both the affection and confidence of his master, took very much to heart. Till the end of his life the thought of Grey’s treatment had power to anger him. He continually applauded the administration of the discredited Deputy, condoned his cruelties, praised his brutality, and only regretted that he had been superseded before he had time to carry out his policy more thoroughly. He evidently resented the coming of Sir John Perrot, who, reversing Grey’s policy, was careful not to arouse religious animosity, and was, on the whole, far more successful than his predecessor. But Spenser, incurably prejudiced, expressed his conviction that the new Deputy’s government “could not be sounde nor holsome for that realme, being soe contrarye to the former.” Perrot was bluff and

⁴⁸ *View*, p. 655.

⁴⁹ *C.S.P.Sp.* (1581-86), p. 421.

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honest, and was not a favourite with the officials, and the Poet, echoing his other enemies, insinuates that the Lord Deputy had an ulterior motive in keeping down the English, and conciliating the Irish. There can be no doubt that Spenser owed nothing to the new Governor.

After Lord Grey's departure the Poet's fortunes did not advance in Dublin, though he did not break the connection with the capital till 1586, or perhaps later. No further appointment came his way. Compared with such men as Jeffrey Fenton and Ludowick Bryskett he had been but moderately successful. There was nothing in particular to commend him to the Irish government, for he had shown no outstanding ability as an official. He lacked the tact necessary for one holding a public position. A man of hasty moods, he was not slow to express resentment, and must frequently have given offence to those who might have served him. Growing discontented doubtless at the want of opportunities for making his fortune in Dublin, the Munster Plantation scheme turned his thoughts to the south.

Whether he left the Capital with regret, it is hard to tell. There were several cultured men among the officials there, some of them with literary aspirations like his own. The only picture, however, that we have of Spenser's social life in Dublin, we get from the account of the party held at Ludowick

Bryskett's cottage outside the city, some time between 1582 and 1584.⁵⁰ The guests, according to Bryskett's account in his *Discourse of Civill Life*, included: "Dr. Long, Primate of Ardmagh; Sir Robert Dillon, Knight; M. Dormer, the Queenes sollicitor; Capt. Nicholas Dawtry; Capt. Christopher Carleil; Capt. Thomas Norreis; Capt. Warham St. Leger, and Mr. Edmond Spenser, late your Lordship's secretary;⁵¹ and Th. Smith, Apothecary." For three days the guests came out and partook of Bryskett's hospitality, and discussed many subjects chiefly philosophic. With representatives of the law, of the army, of the church, and of letters, there must have been plenty of scope for discourse. Here probably Spenser gleaned from the discussions some of those opinions he afterwards embodied in the *View of the Present State of Ireland*. Captain Norreis and Captain Warham St. Leger he would meet again later on in Munster. Carleil was a sailor and Walsingham's son-in-law. The Apothecary was the only English doctor in Dublin. He had found it hard to make a living as he complained to the authorities, because the people of Irish birth preferred the native leaches to his ministrations, his costly drugs had remained unsold, and he was greatly hindered in his faculty. But at

⁵⁰ Grosart, Vol. I, p. 500-508.

⁵¹ It was addressed to Lord Grey.

this period he was in better circumstances, as he had been granted a special allowance.⁵²

At this interesting gathering Spenser outlines the scheme of his *Faerie Queene*, in which "he was already well entred." The Poet had not yet become famous, but Bryskett, anxious to show off his friend to the assembly, introduces him as a man "not onely perfect in the Greek tongue, but also very well read in Philosophie, both morall and naturall," and he suggests that Master Spenser should give them a discourse on Moral Philosophy, which invitation the Poet declines, owing to the fact, not unknown to many of them, that he had "already undertaken a work tending to the same effect." But he bears his part in the discussion that ensues on metaphysical subjects.

We have now to follow the fortunes of three of this party in the project for the planting of Munster.

⁵² *Jour. Roy. Soc. of Antiq.*, p. 226, vol. 13.

CHAPTER III.

SPENSER AS "UNDERTAKER"

NO information that would enable us to decide at what date Spenser settled in Cork has yet come to light. On July 18th, 1586, he addresses a letter from Dublin to his friend Gabriel Harvey. If he did not leave Dublin in that year he was certainly, at the time, acquiring property in the south. Queen Elizabeth's letter of June 27th, 1586, mentions him in connection with the Kilcolman estate, and sometime in the same year he was appointed Prebendary of Effin, Co. Limerick. His name appears in the list of those who were in arrears with the First Fruits in 1587,¹ so he must have held the living for at least a year previously. The full entry runs :

LIMERICEN.

Edmondus Spencer, preb. de Effin, iij li.² [£3]

Effin is near Charleville, close to the district where Spenser settled, and it is improbable that there

¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 22, and (1598-9), p. lvii. The Act for First Fruits (28 Henry VIII, c. 12) enacted that all persons nominated to any ecclesiastical preferment should pay to the King the profits for one year, to whomsoever the foundation, patronage or gift belong.

² Carpenter, p. 32.

could have been two Edmund Spensers in the same part of the country at the same time.

But if Spenser did not come to Munster in 1586, there is no doubt that he was there in the following year, for in the Wages Book for the half year beginning October 1st, 1587, and ending March, 31st, 1588, we find that Ludowick Bryskett, Clerk of the Council of Munster, had "one Spenser" acting as his deputy during that period.³ In 1588 the Poet severed the last link that bound him to Dublin—he resigned his post as Clerk of the Chancery for the Faculties. He was succeeded by Arland Ussher, the father of the celebrated Primate. In all probability, he in turn, bought the office from Spenser.^{3a}

This practice of selling offices, or the succession to them, was a general custom at the period. It was recognised by the Crown, and Elizabeth, always sparing of ready money, used to reward her faithful servants with leases of office.⁴ The *State Papers* contain several references to this practice and its attendant evils.⁵ Sometimes an office in Ireland had to be bought in England as well.⁶ Ludowick Bryskett had been in turn Clerk of the Privy

³ *Car. Cal.* (1575-88), p. 462.

^{3a} Ussher, like Cowyck, was also made sole Registrar of Appeals Ecclesiastical. *Fiant*, 5034 (4128).

⁴ *Fragmenta Regalia*, p. 254; *Lib. Hib.*, p. 26, Vol. I, part 2.

⁵ e.g. *C.S.P.Ir.* (1592-96), pp. 195, 220; *Car. Cal.* (1589-1600), p. 219.

⁶ *Birch*, Vol. I, p. 130.

Council, Clerk of the Chancery for the Faculties, and Clerk of the Council General. The latter appointment he obtained in 1583. It was an important and arduous post equivalent to an Under-Secretaryship in modern times, and on being appointed, some time later in the year, Clerk of the Council of Munster, he resigned the position in the Council General. The fact that we find Spenser acting as Deputy Clerk in 1587, naturally leads to the question—Did Bryskett dispose of the office to the Poet? Obviously not, as the Wages Book shows Spenser to have been merely a substitute. He seems, however, to have bought the succession to the post. Later on he is spoken of as Clerk to the Council of Munster, but owing to the fact that Bryskett outlived him, Spenser was never officially appointed. The patent remained in the hands of Bryskett till 1600, when he sold it for £200 to Richard Boyle, afterwards Earl of Cork, and resigned in his favour.⁷ This sum must have represented the value of the office, as Boyle eventually disposed of it in turn, for the same amount.⁸

Bryskett had originally received this appointment on March 11th,⁹ but the Patent was not issued till November 6th. Immediately after it was granted he must have set about finding a purchaser for the reversion, for on January 26th, 1584, the Earl of

⁷ *Lismore Papers* (2nd series), Vol. I, p. 19 et seq.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹ *Lib. Hib.* Vol. I, pt. ii.

Ormonde, writing to Burghley, asks that his servant, Henry Sheeth, may be Clerk of the Council of Munster.^{9a} The first purchaser could not have been Boyle, as that adventurer did not come to Ireland till 1588, and the deed between himself and Bryskett is dated the 8th day of February, 1599 (*i.e.*, 1600). The fact that Bryskett was still drawing the salary in 1588 shows that he had not disposed of more than the reversion, that is presuming that some deal regarding the position had actually taken place. Spenser did undoubtedly acquire some interest in the post, whatever it was, for when Bryskett sold the office outright to Boyle, he undertook "to uphold and confirm the grant against the claims of the assignees of Edmond Spenser, gent., deceased, or of any others."

The perquisites attached to this position must have been considerable, as the salary amounted to only £20 per annum and "diette and table"⁴⁰ The Secretary apparently attended on the President of Munster, and was entitled to his keep, with the other members of the suite. "I attended my Lord President in all his employments," says Boyle.

The idea of these Presidencies had first arisen in the reign of Edward IV, but did not take practical shape till 1565, when a definite scheme was drawn up and presented to Elizabeth. The Queen, as

^{9a} *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 494.

¹⁰ *State Papers, Ireland*, Vols. 134-41, and 115-45. Quoted in Carpenter.

usual, objected to the expense,¹¹ but this important feature of Elizabethan policy eventually materialised in the following year. The first president appointed by Sir Henry Sidney was Warham St. Leger, but he not being acceptable to Elizabeth, owing to his supposed leanings towards the Geraldines, as against their rivals the Ormonds, the appointment was never confirmed, and Sir John Pollard was nominated in his stead. But he never acted either, as he was prevented by a long illness, and in 1570, Sir John Perrot became the first President of Munster.

The Presidency Court consisted of a President answerable to the Lord Deputy, as well as a Council composed of the prelates and nobles of the province, a Chief Justice and an Attorney General, together with a Treasurer, Clerk to the Council, and other administrative officers. The object of the establishment of these courts was "to determine the complaints of the Queen's subjects, and to reduce them to the knowledge of God,"¹² but it is not clear how this pious end was to be attained.

Sir John Perrot seems to have established the headquarters of the Council at Limerick, and while Spenser was actually carrying out the duties of clerk, the Council continued to meet in that town. But the President could hold his Court when and

¹¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1500-1573), p. 393.

¹² *Lib. Hib.*, Vol. I, p. 184; Falkiner; *Illustrations of Irish History*, p. 130-1.

where he pleased, and Sir Thomas Norreys transferred the seat of government to Cork. Carew also had his headquarters in the same city at Shandon Castle, and in later years, St. Leger during his period of office, held his court at Doneraile.

The officials associated with Spenser in the Council of Munster were :—

President—Sir John Norreys (absent). Thomas Norreys acted for his brother, on whose death in 1597, he succeeded to the post.

Chief Justice—Jesse Smith, and later William Saxey.

Second Justice—John Meaghe (or Meade), and later James Goold.

Attorney—Richard Beacon.

Provost-Marshal—George Thornton.¹³

The Escheator was William Wiseman, who married the Poet's daughter Katherine, and Boyle was made Substitute escheator in 1596.¹⁴ Among the prelates, the most important was the Bishop of Cork, William Lyon, Lord Grey's former chaplain and, in all probability, an old friend of Spenser's.

It was likely through the influence of some of his powerful friends that the Poet came to share in the confiscated Geraldine estates, which the Queen proposed to plant with loyal English settlers.

A plantation scheme was a settled part of Tudor

¹³ *Car. Cal.* (1575-88), p. 40; and (1592-96), pp. 329, 401.

¹⁴ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1592-96), p. 76.

policy in Ireland. Henry VIII coquetted with the plan for a time, but after seven years of costly warfare, he decided that conciliation would be cheaper than conquest, and the idea of an English plantation was abandoned temporarily. Mary revived that policy, however, in Leix and Offaly, and in Elizabeth's reign it was still virile. The idea appealed to all those restless spirits in England who revelled in any new project. Various schemes had already been put forward during this reign, and attempts were even made to put them into execution, for the ideas of confiscation and extermination had become practical politics. But we are only concerned with the experiment in which our Poet took part—the Plantation of Munster.

The vast Desmond estates were formally confiscated when the Earl was attainted by a Parliament held by Sir John Perrot in 1583. The new Lord Deputy's experience as President of Munster would now come in useful, and he was directed to have the escheated lands carefully surveyed, and also to confer with the Council of Munster and with any other well-informed persons who could be of service, so that he might be in a position to advise the government on the re-peopling of the despoiled areas "with such as shall shew more obedience to her Majesty and her crown than hath been of late years."¹⁵ Preference was to

¹⁵ *Desiderata Curiosa*, Vol. I, p. 28, et seq.

be given to those that had served the Queen most dutifully in the late troubles, and in particular to those who had suffered any material loss.¹⁶ That the number of families might be increased, and that these might form a virile body capable of serving the crown and defending themselves, younger sons were to be preferred to the noble heads of families. Those who would "undertake" to carry out the scheme and to hold their lands on the conditions stipulated were termed "undertakers."

No modern emigration agency could set out in a more tempting and practical manner than is to be found in these old documents, the benefits that were to be derived from participation in the venture. The expenses of upkeep for the Undertaker himself for the first year, and also the necessary charges for his farmers, copyholders, and cottagers are given. The amounts to be expended by the Undertaker for wages, food, stock, and seed are calculated at £278. Of this sum £67 6s. 8d. is represented as out-of-pocket expenses, the remainder representing stock which would increase. For this first year—the critical one—provision would be made in England to secure men and maid servants, as well as a supply of bread, drink, and corn; Ireland would supply cattle of all sorts, and at low prices. It was advised that every gentleman should take, on his first going over, all his farmers, freeholders,

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 35, et seq.

and some of his copyholders, as well as artisans of various kinds.¹⁷

The scheme was taken up mainly by gentlemen from the west of England, many of whom had interested themselves in the previous plans. It was hoped that the colony would absorb some of the thousands of peasants who had been thrown out of employment by the changes in the English land system during the sixteenth century. The enclosure of lands and the conversion of arable land into pasture, greatly lessened the demand for labour, and the number of "masterless men" who were roaming about the country constituted a serious social problem.

But in spite of the benefits set forth, the project was not received by the agricultural class with the warmth expected. English farmers and artisans saw little profit in exiling themselves to a land with such a doubtful reputation—for English officials had always insisted on the savage and lawless state of Ireland.¹⁸ As usually happens in such cases, those who were most anxious to take part were often undesirables, and of the others, several, disheartened by unexpected difficulties, returned home. But many Catholics and other "dangerous persons"

¹⁷ *Desiderata Curiosa*, p. 57; *Car. Cal.* (1575-88), p. 412-13.

¹⁸ The sturdy Cornishmen, for instance, who would have been most desirable colonists, scouted the notion, and not one could be found willing to go.—*C. S. P. Dom.* (1581-90), p. 323.

took advantage of the opportunity to escape from England, under the guise of Undertakers.¹⁹

In the Articles of 1585,²⁰ it was laid down that the land was to be peopled before Michaelmas, 1593; grants were to be in fee farm, tenure in free socage and not in capite.^{20a} Till Michaelmas, 1590, all were to live rent free; for the next three years half a year's rent was to be paid, and from 1593 the whole rent would be charged. This rent would be calculated according to the nature of the soil, and was not to exceed 3d. the acre in the counties Kerry, Connello (Limerick), and Tipperary, or 2d. in the counties of Cork and Waterford. The maximum grant was to be 12,000 acres, but there were also to be seignories of 10,000, 8,000, 6,000, and 4,000 acres. Only Englishmen were eligible as Undertakers, and no estates could be let to the "mere Irish," nor could they be maintained in any family. It was forbidden to the female heirs to marry any but those born of English parents, or such as should descend from the first patentees. Certain immunities from taxes and customs were granted for the first seven or ten years. After Michaelmas, 1590, undertakers, farmers, freeholders were to contribute their quota of men and

¹⁹ *C.S.P.Dom.* (1598-1601), p. 288.

²⁰ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 84-9; *Car. Cal.* (1575-88), p. 413.

^{20a} i.e., fee simple property held by the tenant and his heirs at a yearly rent, and for which they did not owe service to the Crown.

equipment to the army, but no patentee could earn wages as a soldier. To modify the sense of exile, settlers that came from the same county in England were to be grouped together. The Queen undertook to provide garrisons for the defence of their frontiers for seven years, and then new arrangements would be made.

As may be imagined, the working out of such a gigantic scheme involved much time and trouble, and led to many complications, and Burleigh, labouring with numerous details, sighs, " and so I end as weary as any that hath gon a pilgrimage."²¹ The survey was taking a much longer time than had been anticipated, and the Undertakers, anxious to get possession, had come to an agreement among themselves as to what special seignories or parts should be allotted to each of them. But when a year had passed, and the survey was still incomplete, the Chancellor was directed to pass the letters patent to all lands allotted by mutual consent. As a year had been lost, full rent would not now be charged till 1594. In this same document the Undertakers were given the sole right to sow corn in Munster. All of them who were knights were to be joined in commission with the President and Council for the government of the province.²² And so at last a start was made.

²¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 89.

²² *Car. Cal.* (1575-88), p. 439.

Some doubt exists as to when Spenser obtained his estate. In the list of allotments mutually agreed to in February, 1586, his name does not appear. Andrew Reade, of Faccombe, Hants, and his associates were to have "the manor and castle of Kilcolman, and the toghe or canthred there called Grossaghe, otherwise Rossaghe, and the warren of conies there, and all the lands, etc., to the premises belonging."²³ These lands certainly formed part of the grant made later to the Poet. Both names appear officially for the same lands on the same date. Reade got the grant, and Spenser's name appears in the Articles for the Undertakers,²⁴ though his patent was not actually passed till 1590. But as was natural, numerous mistakes occurred, and it sometimes happened that the same land was granted to more than one person,²⁵ though in this instance it is probable that Spenser bought the title to this estate from Reade, who was the official owner till the patent had been surrendered. Sir John Popham in his declaration concerning the Undertakers,²⁶ dated March 4th, 1589, confesses that he does not know what Mr. Reade has done in Kilcolman. It is evident that Mr. Reade was no longer there, for in the May of the same year, Edmund Spenser sends the answer to

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 449.

²⁴ Grosart, p. 150.

²⁵ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 284.

²⁶ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 284; p. 130-131.

the questions of the Commission²⁷ appointed to enquire into the state of the attainted lands passed to the Undertakers.

From this answer we get some information about the position of affairs on Spenser's estate. He asserts "that he hath undertaken the peopling of a seignory of 4,000 acres allotted to him by a particular from the undertakers, in which the castle and lands of Kilcolman and Rossack were appointed to him,²⁸ the which want much of the said whole proportion of 4,000 acres." He calculates that he is short 1,000 acres, at least, of his due proportion—a pretty keen calculation, as the subsequent survey showed. He goes on to state that the patent had not yet been passed to him, his lands were not established, and consequently he had not made any division of lands to his tenants, and had only six households of English people²⁹ on his estate for the same reason, but "sundry honest persons in England" had promised to come over to inhabit his land as soon as the patent would be passed. As he went to England at the end of this year, he may have secured some additional colonists.

Spenser's patent bears the date of October 26th, 1590. By it he was granted "the manor, castle,

²⁷ Ibid, p. 198.

²⁸ This must have been subsequent to February, or there must have been an understanding that he was taking over Reade's interest.

²⁹ On an estate of 4,000 acres there should have been 22 families at least.

town and lands of Kylcolman lpld. (ploughland) ; Kylnevalley lpld. ; Lysnemucky lpld. ; Ardadam lpld. ; Arden-reaghe lpld. ; Olde-Rossocke als. Croskack lpld. ; Carrigyne lpld. ; Bally Ellis lpld. ; Kyllmack Ennes $\frac{1}{2}$ pld. ; Ardenbane $\frac{1}{2}$ pld. ; co. Cork ; amounting to 3,028 acres ; also a rent of 26s. 8d. ster. due to the late Lord of (Thetmore) out of Bally (macAdam), and a rent of 6s. 8d. payable to the late traitor Sir John of Desmond out of Ballyfoynigh—to hold for ever in fee farm by the name of ‘ Hap Hazard ’ by fealty in common socage. Rent £17 7s. 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ d. from 1594.³⁰ and 33s. 4d. for the services of the free tenants ; also a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for each acre of waste land enclosed. . If the lands are found by the survey to contain more than the estimated number of acres, grantee shall pay 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ d. for each English acre in excess. Power to impark 151 acres ; grantee to build houses for 24 families, of which one to be for himself ; two for freeholders of 300 acres ; two for farmers of 400 acres ; and eleven for copyholders of 100 acres each.”³¹

This grant is under the Queen’s letter of June xxviii, for the repeopling of Munster with loyal subjects, and is made under the following conditions :—

“ There must be paid on the death or alienation

³⁰ Half only, for the previous three years.

³¹ *Cal. Fiantis*, Elizabeth No. 5473 (6536). The entry is defaced in parts, and emendations are taken from *C. H. & A. Jour.*, 1st series, Vol. II, p. 345.

of the tenant or owner of the principal residence and demesne, the best beast as a heriot ; relief must be paid on the death of grantee, his heirs and assigns, according to the usage in England between common persons : if within seven years the value of any of the lands is found to have been concealed, and that at any former time anyone paid a larger rent, such rent shall become payable under this grant ; grantee and assigns may export to England and Wales, corn, grain and other victuals whatsoever grown upon the premises free of custom, poundage or other duty ; grantee and inhabitants are discharged from all rents, charges, incumbrances, cesses, customs and impositions whatsoever, except those named in this grant, or which shall be imposed by Parliament after 1594, or which are required by the articles of the Plantation. Grantee shall erect houses (as above), if any of these houses be unbuilt by Michaelmas, 1594, the crown may enter a corresponding portion of the land and retain it until the houses be built ; if after that date any of the houses remain uninhabited for sixty days in one year, notice shall be given by an officer of the crown, and they remaining unoccupied for six months may, with the lands belonging, be entered by the crown, grantee receiving no abatement of rent but being able to recover them on providing occupants ; grantee and his assigns may alien any part of the lands, the capital messuage and demesne excepted,

to any person willing to take the same, to hold of him for ever ; provided that if any alienation of any part of the premises be made by grantee or his assigns to any being mere Irish not descended of an original English ancestor of name and blood, and be not redeemed within a year, the premises so alienated be forfeited, but the full rent to be payable from the remaining lands ; if any portion of the lands be lawfully recovered from grantee a proportionate allowance to be made from his rent.'³²

The accompanying map shows the position of the Poet's estate. It represents the country at the present day, and most of the townlands of the grant may be easily identified. It is evident that Spenser got a compact block of land lying between the rivers Bregoge and Awbeg and the Ballyhoura Hills, with Ardadam and Kilvicanease (Killmaceness). Thus the Bregoge flowed through his estate and the Awbeg bounded it. The seventeenth century maps show Lysmucky and Knocknamadery under the hills and to the north of Ardenbane and Ardadam.

³² *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. VII, p. 249-50.

Land in Ireland was usually reckoned by the ploughland, which was the amount of land that could be worked in one year by one plough and six horses. It represented 120 acres of good arable land, but as neither bog, waste nor woodland was counted, the extent of the ploughland varied, and might mount up to about 500 acres. Spenser's estate bordering the hills was wooded, and there was marshy land around the lake, which explains the fact that it took 3,028 acres to make 9 ploughlands. According to the Irish land system no rent or tax was ever paid for bad land, but Elizabeth charged 1d. an acre for waste land.

Kylnevalley does not appear, and it is possible that it is identical with Knocknamadery, as the latter name occurs subsequently in connection with the estate, when Kylnevalley seems to have disappeared.³³ Spenser's grant did not include Byblox which was Synan property, but he seems to have acquired the neighbouring townland of Richardstown, or at least its castle.³⁴ His lands had belonged to Sir John of Desmond, who on being attainted of treason in connection with the Geraldine Rebellion, forfeited his estates.

Just after his patent was granted, Spenser lost his Kildare home of New Abbey. As he had not paid the rent for seven and a half years, he was deprived of the lease which was granted to Thomas Lambyn, on December 1st, 1590.³⁵

In 1592, the compactness of the "Hap Hazard" estate was marred by the loss of Ardadam, Ardgilbert-Ballyellis.^{35a} This part was claimed by Nicholas Shynan. There had been so many disputes about the escheated lands that a commission had to be set up to decide titles. Most of those who had been concerned in the Desmond rebellion had, on being pardoned, got back their lands. But these lands had in some cases been

³³ Kilnevalley is probably Coill na Bhealaig (wood of the road). At Ballyhoura the old road crossed the hills, and Kilnevalley must have been near it.

³⁴ *Roche MSS.*, Brit. Museum.

³⁵ Grosart and Fiants of Elizabeth, No. 5381.

^{35a} Ardgilbert and Ballyellis were the same townland.

already apportioned to Undertakers. Moreover, the question of boundaries had led to much trouble between the English and Irish or Anglo-Irish, as well as between the Undertakers themselves. The *State Papers* of 1592 contain an account of the proceedings held in Munster by the Commissioners in the summer of that year. This case, in which Nicholas Shynan was plaintiff and Edmund Spenser defendant, was heard. The lands in dispute were those mentioned above, and also Killoyenesie (Kilvicanease). The plaintiff's title was stated to be by right of descent from his ancestors, while Spenser contended that these lands being part of Sir John of Desmond's property—*viz.*, part of Kilcolman and Rossagh, had escheated to the Queen. The case was pleaded at great length, but no decision was reached, owing to the difficulty of deciding titles, particularly as the true boundaries of the townlands were disputed. Eventually it was agreed to refer the matter to an impartial jury to be empanelled by the sheriff of the County Cork. At this second hearing a verdict in favour of Shynan was returned, in respect of Ardadam, Ardgilbert-Ballyellis. Accordingly, these lands were restored to him, failing any further evidence in favour of Spenser. The Poet, it was decided, was to continue in possession of Kilmaceness, unless the plaintiff could show a better title than he had put forward at the hearing. As Ardadam and Ballyellis consisted

each of one ploughland, Spenser was granted an abatement of 47s. 6d. in his rent till Michaelmas, 1594, and after that of £4 15s. a year for ever. This abatement was in accordance with the value of two ploughlands in the County Cork, where the seignory of 12,000 acres was rented at 100 marks.³⁶

The result of this lawsuit partly explains the discrepancy in the half-yearly amounts paid by Spenser in 1592, as given in the *Calendar*. At Easter he paid £5 15s. 10d., but at Michaelmas the amount was £3 19s. 6d.³⁷ At the same time he must have increased his grant, or it must have been revalued, as his original rent was only to be £8 13s. 9d. per annum till 1594.

It must have been about this period that Spenser, unwilling to hamper himself with the official duties of Clerk of the Council of Munster, found in his turn, a deputy. When he went to London in 1589, to arrange for the publication of the first part of the *Faerie Queene*, he left as substitute "one Chitester,"³⁸ the Constable of Limerick. But this arrangement was only a temporary one, for the next deputy, Nicholas Curteys, in a petition to Sir Robert Cecil (?), after the Poet's death, speaks of his long service "in that poor and troublesome place of Clerk of the Council of Munster."³⁹ Did Spenser

³⁶ *State Papers, Ireland*, Vol. 168, No. 10 (1). Not entered in the *Calendar*, quoted from Carpenter, p. 35.

³⁷ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1592-96), pp. 56, 57.

³⁸ *C.S.P.Ir.* 1588-92), p. 341.

³⁹ *Ibid.* (1598-99), p. 484-5.

in his turn sell the reversion of the office to Curteys? It would seem so, for Curteys complains that the negotiations between Bryskett, Spenser and himself took up his whole estate in England, which was then of good value, and to make matters worse, now that Spenser was dead—"the mean and witness of our mutual trust and confidence"—Bryskett repudiated the bargain, and was about to drive him out of the position, and to sell the office once more—which, as already noted, he did.

But we are anticipating. His literary work and the care of his estate now occupied all the Poet's time. As it had been lying waste for so long, the land was generally overgrown with long, thick grass, and in most places with heath, brambles, and furze.⁴⁰ Clearing it entailed much labour, and that was not easily obtained, owing to the ban against employing people of Irish birth.

Most of the Planters had now settled into their allotted estates, or—when they failed to get possession—into lands where they had no title at all.⁴¹ Altogether about forty Englishmen got grants in Munster. Some of these lived within easy riding distance of Kilcolman, so that the Poet was not cut off from the society of his own countrymen. Whether he appreciated their company is another question. Sir William Herbert considered that he

⁴⁰ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 167.

⁴¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 111.

was disgraced by being associated with such companions.⁴² The Solicitor-General complained that "many causeless contentions happen between the undertakers, striving who shall have most when much less were sufficient."⁴³

Whatever Spenser's relations with his own countrymen were, he was soon embroiled with his Anglo-Irish neighbour, Maurice, Lord Roche, Viscount Fermoy, whose lands were near Spenser's on the east,⁴⁴ and at whose expense the Poet tried to increase his estate to the extent of sixteen ploughlands and several castles. It is with a sense of shock that we read of his threatening and menacing the said Lord Roche's tenants, seizing their cattle, and beating their servants and bailiffs. But the Lord of Fermoy who had remained loyal to the crown during the Desmond rebellion was not likely to permit any encroachments by the new landowners, who, in a country where genealogy was a matter of vast importance, were regarded with suspicion and scorn by Anglo-Irish and natives alike.⁴⁵ Lord Roche lodged his petition against Spenser and four more neighbours on October 12th, 1589, but they retaliated with a Bill against that nobleman, which was endorsed by Edmond Spenser, presumably as Clerk

⁴² Letter to Burghley, quoted in *Life of McCarthy Mor*, p. 51-2.

⁴³ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 51.

⁴⁴ Contemporary maps. He also had lands to the north.

⁴⁵ *View*, p. 675.

to the Council of Munster.⁴⁶ Lord Roche, it was complained, had imprisoned men of Mr. Edmund Spenser and of others. He had killed "a beef" of his smith's for mending Mr. Pier's plough iron, and he killed "a fat beef" of Teig Olyves, because Mr. Spenser lay in his house, as he came from the sessions at Limerick. But in thus giving a night's hospitality to the Clerk of the Council of Munster Teig Olyve⁴⁷ was acting illegally. Lest the government, however, should take a lenient view of these offences on the part of a nobleman who had the ear of the Queen,⁴⁸ he was also accused of speaking ill of her Majesty's government and laws, and of concealing land that should have escheated to the crown. But these accusations evidently fell flat.

This enmity between the Poet and Lord Roche continued to the end. Soon after the adverse decision in the Synan case the Poet was again at law with the nobleman, regarding three ploughlands, part of Shanballymore, which as the result of a previous suit, had been declared Lord Roche's inheritance. But Spenser had made it a condition, when assigning his office as Clerk to the Council of Munster to Nicholas Curteys that "during his life he should be free in the said office for his causes," and as he was thus spared the fees he took the

⁴⁶ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 247.

⁴⁷ Tadhg was possibly Lord Roche's bard (olambh). Grosart reads O'Lyne, a common name in the district.

⁴⁸ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 246.

opportunity to harrass his enemy. He accordingly brought up the case of the Shanballymore ploughlands before the Vice-President and Council of Munster. But Lord Roche took this case and another against Joan Ny Callaghan, who was in league with the Poet, to the Lord Chancellor in 1593. He evidently gained his suit, for these lands are not at any time reckoned as Spenser's. In 1594 there was a further suit against "this heavy adversary," as Lord Roche calls him, for three ploughlands of Ballingerath which the Poet had entered and taken possession of, cutting the wood and the growing corn, to the loss of £200 to Lord Roche.⁴⁹ Spenser, who conducted his own case, neglected, for some reason or other, to appear within the time stipulated, and the plaintiff was decreed possession. No doubt some of the acerbity of the Poet's remarks on the Anglo-Irish is due to his experience at the hands of Lord Roche.

In addition to the Kilcolman property, Spenser had acquired at the time of his death, the castle, town and lands of Renny and Killaherry, in the barony of Fermoy; the Abbey of Buttevant and half a ploughland thereto belonging: also the temporalities and spiritualities of Kilvrogan, Kilwantan, Backbeliston, Neghwan and Ballinlegan.⁵⁰ He moreover had the parsonages, rectories and

⁴⁹ Original in Rolls Office. Quoted from Hardiman, Vol. I, p. 320.

⁵⁰ Draft of Orders of Revenue side of Exchequer, 1609.

tithes of Templebride, otherwise Kilbride, Brinny and Kilbonane.

Most of these places are easily identifiable. Neghwan variously written Nowens, St. Nowens, Athnowen or Owans, is the modern Ovens in the barony of East Muskerry. Backbeliston is an older name for the same place, as appears from a previous grant.⁵¹ Kilbonane is in the same barony, Brinny is in Kinnalea, Templebready (Templebride) is in Kerricurrihy and Kilbrogan in Kinalmeaky. Ballylegan is near Glanworth in Lord Roche's country, and Kilwantan is probably Killountain in the parish of Ballymodan to the south of

"The pleasaunt Bandon crownd with many a wood,"

or Killountane in the parish of Innishannon to the east of the river.

There is no mention of Effin among his church lands, so probably the Poet did not pay the £3 arrearages and lost the living.

The Renny lands comprised 365 acres, and these were held at a rent of £6 8s. 11d. The Buttevant portion consisted of 30 acres⁵² This old Franciscan monastery was founded, according to the Four Masters, by David Oge Barry in 1251. It must have come into the Poet's possession in or before 1597, as in February, 1598, by direction of the

⁵¹ *Fiants of Henry VIII*, 304 (437).

⁵² *Book of Arrears and Quit Rents*, 1702.

Chief Baron, Spenser got till Easter term to pay the arrearages of rent due on this property, since "by reason of trouble in the way, he durst not bring donne anie money."⁵³ The Abbey was situated on an eminence above the Awbeg. Its interesting ruins are still to be seen on the east side of the principal street in Buttevant. They are now attached to the Catholic Church. In Spenser's day, though spoiled, it must still have been a very beautiful building, and perhaps it was the sight of its ruin and desolation that drew from him that outburst against the ravages of the Blatant Beast in the monastery:—

Into their cloysters now he broken had,
Through which the Monckes he chaced here and there,
And them pursu'd into their dortours sad,
And searched all their cels and secrets neare:
In which what filth and ordure did appeare,
Were yrkesome to report; yet that foule Beast,
Nought sparing them, the more did tosse and teare,
And ransacke all their dennes from most to least,
Regarding nought religion, nor their holy heast.

From thence into the sacred Church he broke,
And robd the Chancell, and the deskes downe threw,
And Altars fouled, and blasphemy spoke,
And th' Images, for all their goodly hew,

⁵³ Exchequer Records, Dublin. Quoted *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. 16, topographical notes, p. 353. Various documents in connection with this part of property quoted in Grosart, p. 561-3. Originals destroyed.

Did cast to ground, whilst none was them to rew;
So all confounded and disordered there.

(*F.Q.* Bk. VI. c. xii. st. 24-25.)

These later acquisitions were intended, as will appear hereafter, for the Poet's second son. According to tradition, Spenser spent some of his time at Renny Castle. No trace of it now remains, but in the last century portion of the ruins was still standing; an old tree overhanging the river was said to have been the Poet's favourite seat, and was called Spenser's oak. It, too, has disappeared. This castle was built by one of the Fitzgeralds, and was situated near Convamore, just below where the Awbeg joins the Blackwater. It is of interest to note that the Poet's friend, Ludowick Bryskett, was granted, in 1594, the neighbouring Priory of Ponte or Bridgetown, situated at the junction of the two rivers.⁵⁴ He never possessed it, as the grant was only to come into force at "the end of existing interests," which were Lord Roche's.

But in spite of the many cares that the management of his estates entailed, Spenser found ample time for literary activity at Kilcolman, in fact most of his works were produced there. Let us forget the "Undertaker" then for a while, and turn to the poet at home.

⁵⁴ *Fiant*s of Elizabeth, No. 5911 (4845).

CHAPTER IV.

THE POET AT KILCOLMAN

ABOUT three miles to the north-east of Doneraile stands a lonely ruin, beside a small crescent-shaped lake, at the northern end of a vast fertile plain, which is bounded on the north by the Ballyhoura Hills, on the south by the Nagle Mountains, and on the east and west by the mountains of Kerry, and of Waterford respectively. The ruins of a peel tower containing two storeys of the watch-tower, is all that now remains of Spenser's castle of Kilcolman, though it is said to have been originally a structure of some magnitude. The ground begins to rise on this side of the lake, and slopes gradually up to the foot of the neighbouring chain of mountains—Spenser's Old Father Mole. Immediately round the opposite shore it is low and swampy, and there, no doubt, "th' unpleasant Quayre of frogs" are as noisy as they were in the days of Elizabeth, when the Poet wished "theyr choking."

The Castle commands a magnificent view of the surrounding country, which accounts for the building of a stronghold on that particular spot. Tradition says there was formerly an old fort on the same site.

When Spenser entered into possession of it the castle was already ancient, for it had been erected by the first Earl of Desmond in 1347.

However romantic it may be to picture the author of the *Faerie Queene* weaving his magic fancies in this gloomy fortress above the lake, it is improbable that he ever resided in it. Even if it were considerably larger than it now appears to have been, it would have compared very unfavourably with the comfortable mansions then springing up in England. Moreover, Spenser's patent expressly obliged him to build a house for himself, and it is from "my house at Kilcolman" that he dates *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, and not from the castle.

But if the residence he built was not attached to the fortress, it must have been close to it, so as to provide a refuge in case of attack—a necessary precaution in such times. Some distance from the building are the remains of a wall evidently of the same masonry, and this may possibly be a part of the cattle bawn which was attached to every stronghold, and into which the cows were driven at the first sign of danger.

Even if Spenser did not live in this Geraldine castle, his mind would have been affected by its atmosphere, for many legends lingered round it, and it was situated in a district that had many historical associations.

Here in his newly-acquired estate, the son of a

journeyman clothmaker lorded it, with his sister Sarah, it is said, acting as lady of the manor. She certainly joined him in Ireland, and married John Travers, another of the settlers, who probably also came over with Grey. That a sincere affection existed between the brother and sister is evidenced by the fact that he gave her as a marriage portion the lands of Ardenbane and Knocknagappel, or failing the lands, a sum of money.¹

In the days of Elizabeth many a notable visitor came riding to Kilcolman, and friends old and new partook of the Poet's hospitality. They would have found the proximity of his home to the main road a boon, when they were travelling to Kilmallock, then an important military centre, or to the Council in Limerick.

But of the interesting guests we have no record, with one exception—Sir Walter Raleigh, whose visit, memorable in many respects, took place towards the end of 1589.^{1a} The circumstances are

¹ Craik: *Spenser and His Poetry*, Vol. II., p. 250.

The grant was evidently inoperative, and the lands reverted back to the estate, for those two townlands are mentioned as part of the estate granted by patent to the poet's grandson, Edmund, in 1639. (Grosart, p. 560.)

^{1a} One of the windows in the castle is known locally as Raleigh's window, and it is said that the two poets used to sit and smoke there. The castle stands on the lands of Mr. Harold Harold-Barry, whose grandfather buttressed one of the walls that was in danger of falling. In the course of the excavation a number of curiously-shaped tobacco pipes were dug up, also some deer bones, the relics probably of some by-gone feast. The pipes were removed, I have been told, to the National Museum.

immortalised in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*. From this poem we get a view of the Poet's life at Kilcolman, set in a pastoral framework, continuing the style of his *Shepheards Calender*. Spenser describes the meeting with this famous Undertaker, who had come over from Lismore.² At the time he was residing in Ireland, and spending some of that restless energy of his in schemes for the development of his vast estates. In spite of all prohibitions he had managed to secure 42,000 acres. "A straunge Shepheard" he is called, as if the two had never met before. They had certainly been at Smerwick together, though their ways had afterwards lain apart. In this poem comes a charming picture of the two poets entertaining each other with verses, under the "alders by the Mullaes shore," each delighting in the work of the other. The subject of Spenser's contribution, he relates, was the love of the River Bregoge for the shiny Mulla.³ The theme of Raleigh's verses—the "great unkindnesse," and "usage hard of Cynthia the Ladie of the Sea"—introduces the subject proper, the journey to England.

Spenser's friend read the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*, admired the work and advised

² *Car. Cal.* 1589-1600, p. 12.

³ "My River Bregog," he calls it—a reference to the fact that it flowed through his estate on the east; for a similar reason we have "Mulla mine."

immediate publication, offering to help to push the Poet's fortunes at Court.

He gan to cast great lyking to my lore,
And great dislyking to my lucklesse lot,
That banisht had my selfe, like wight forlore,
Into that waste, where I was quite forgot.
The which to leave, thenceforth he counseld mee
Unmeet for man in whom was ought regardfull,
And wend with him his Cynthia to see,
Whose grace was great and bounty most rewardfull.

On their arrival in London Raleigh brought the Poet once again to Elizabeth's notice, and no doubt gave him much cynical advice on the conduct of a courtier, for Sir Walter was an adept in that art familiar to all the courts of the Renaissance—the adulation of the sovereign. Spenser joined the Queen's more humble adorers who professed to give, in antique fashion, divine honours to the Prince. Scattered throughout his works are grossly flattering passages which at the present day would evoke scorn and contempt.

Raleigh, to whom all things of the mind made strong appeal, was generous and enthusiastic in his praise of contemporary poets, but his interests were many-sided. In all probability, he offered Spenser the hospitality of his London residence, Durham House, and introduced him to any of his influential friends who might be of assistance ; but those daring schemes of his occupied much of his time and

attention, and, in any case, the restless adventurer was not in favour at Court for the moment, and consequently could not, personally, advance the Poet's cause to any great extent. Spenser's old patrons, Sidney and Leicester, were now dead, and probably he had not yet attracted his later protector, Essex. He had none of the brilliant boldness of Raleigh, and was unable to push his fortunes without substantial help. He had no commanding presence,⁴ and the gay throng of butterflies regarded him with indifference. So the visit ended in heart-burning disappointment. The *Faerie Queene*, it is true, had been published and the Poet had at once sprung into fame, but the only result was a pension of £50 a year from Elizabeth—and this, it is said, in spite of Burghley's opposition. That Spenser presented the Queen with a paltry doggerel verse when the pension was delayed,⁵ seems improbable, especially as the same verse is also ascribed by a contemporary to the poet, Thomas Churchyard.⁶

Thus, after a year and a half's dalliance, or more, at the Court of Gloriana, the Poet, having failed to secure any appointment, was forced to return to exile in Ireland. Realising that Court life, with its riot of wanton extravagance, artificial love-making, false standards of worth, and lack of "single Truth and simple Honestie," would have disgusted

⁴ Grosart, p. 244.

⁵ *Manningham's Diary* (Camden Society), p. 43.

⁶ Birch, Vol. I, p. 130.

him, it was almost with feelings of relief that he returned to that land which he now calls home, and "whose utmost hardnesse" he had already experienced. Stung to bitterness by his failure, and the humiliation of having been obliged to sue to those whom he despised, he pens that fierce attack in *Colin Clout*, on "Cynthia's noble crew." Careless whom he might offend he lets loose a torrent of scornful invective, which few of the Elizabethan satirists could match. But severe as are his strictures, they are not merely the outpourings of a disappointed aspirant, the picture was little, if anything, overdrawn.⁷

The date of his return home is doubtful, owing to the fact that he dates *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* from Kilcolman, December 27th, 1591⁸ and *Daphnaida*, from London, January, 1591, which would in modern reckoning be 1592. It would seem that he was absent from Ireland when the document of 1592, giving particulars of the number of English tenants under each Undertaker was being prepared.⁹

In return for the "singular favours and sundry good turnes" that had been shown him at his "late being in England," the Poet dedicated the poetic account of his journey to Sir Walter Raleigh. "That you may see," he writes, "that I am not

⁷ Cf. Birch, Vol. I., pp. 24, 26, 39, 57.

⁸ It was not published till 1595.

⁹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1592-96), p. 58.

alwaies ydle as yee thinke, though not greatly well occupied, nor altogether undutifull, though not precisely officious, I make you present of this simple pastorall” From this we may conclude that he was no longer an active official, and that the Council of Munster knew him no more, except when he was pleading “his causes.” He must, therefore, have assigned his office of Clerk of the Council of Munster to Nicholas Curteys after his return from England. Now that his position in the world of letters was assured, he would devote himself entirely to his literary work and the management of his estate.

The next important event in Spenser’s life is his marriage. He fell in love, perhaps in 1592, with a lady whose identity was for long a mystery. Nothing was known of her beyond the fact that her name was Elizabeth, as testified by the sonnets. But the *Council Book of the Corporation of Youghal*, published in 1878 by the late Dr. Richard Caulfield, of Queen’s College, Cork, held the long-sought clue. Under date May 3rd, 1606, is a document, to be referred to later, which gives her name as Elizabeth Boyle, a kinswoman of Sir Richard Boyle, afterwards Earl of Cork. Whether the Poet met her in Ireland or in England is not known. Contrary to the general assumption, there is no evidence to connect her with the neighbourhood of Youghal, before her marriage, and her

kinsman had no connection with Raleigh's estates at the time, in fact he had settled in Co. Limerick.¹⁰ It is probable that her family, like his, came from Kent.¹¹

The Poet's courtship does not seem to have met with a favourable response for some time. He has written a pretty but artificial set of sonnets to his beloved, and these form a kind of diary of his love-making. They are written in the elegiac style of the day, when fashion prescribed a hard and relentless mistress, and consequently, it is difficult to know in how far they are sincere. At the same time they bear in parts the impress of his personality, and the querulous self-pitying note so characteristic of the Poet in his angry disappointed moods frequently appears. He uses the sonnets too to advertise his oft-repeated conviction of the undying worth of his verses. By keeping him in perpetual torment his Proud Fayre held up the completion of the second part of his great poem, and deprived the "most sacred Empresse" of her "Queene of Faery." It is useless for his friend Ludowick Bryskett—who apparently had been making inquiries as to his progress—to urge him to

¹⁰ *Lismore Papers*, 2nd series, Vol. I, p. 19

¹¹ She writes to Boyle in 1616 from Gillingham, where her family may have resided. It is possible that Spenser wooed and won her during that year and a half he spent in London. This would explain the reference to a storm that kept him still about her when he should have returned home.—Sonnet xlv.

write when, as he says, his mind "is tost with troublous fit of a proud love."¹²

He paints his beloved as a scornful maiden much worshipped and admired, but a heartless coquette, who was deaf to all his prayers, and had no pity for his "payneful smart."

But when I pleade, she bids me play my part,
And, when I weep, she sayes, leares are but water,
And, when I waile, she turnes hir selfe to laughter.¹³

Finally, he comes to the conclusion that since nothing can move her, "She is no woman but a senceless stone"—in fact, she outdoes in cruelty the ladies of the Petrarchan conventions.

But he has his revenge, he puts this cold-hearted damsel into Book VI of his immortal poem, under the guise of the Fayre Mirabella, who scorned the love of "many a gentle Knight." Torn by doubts and wounded pride, he draws some solace from the recital of the well-merited sufferings that befell that "scornefull lasse" who confesses

Full many a one for me deepe groand and sight,
And to the dore of death for sorrow drew,
Complayning *out on me* that would not on them rew.

But let them love that list, or live or die,
Me list not die for any lovers doole;

¹² Sonnet, xxxiii.

¹³ Sonnet xviii.

Ne list me leave my loved libertie
To pity him that list to play the foole;
To love my selfe I learned had in schoole.
Thus I triumphed long in lovers paine,
And, sitting carelesse on the scornors stoole
Did laugh at those that did lament and plaine.

Eventually, when he had almost abandoned hope, she accepted him—apparently on the Easter Sunday of the second year.¹⁴

By this time the second instalment of the *Faerie Queene* was completed,¹⁵ and in the joy of his heart, and possibly in atonement for other unflattering references, or to show that they were not intended for her, Spenser makes his promised bride into a fourth Grace. It would have been interesting to read of Mirabella's reclamation which was probably to appear in one of the subsequent Books.

Spenser married Elizabeth Boyle on June 11th (St. Barnabas' Day), possibly in Cork. The year usually assigned to the event is 1594, but it may have been earlier. If the ceremony took place in Cork, it was most likely in Christ Church, generally associated with all official functions and designated the Queenes Chapel. It was here the Mayor and Corporation resorted on all public festivals. It was the most important church within the town walls. The site was that of the present church in what

¹⁴ Sonnet lxxviii.

¹⁵ Sonnet lxxx.

was then known as the Queenes Majesties Street.¹⁶ Very probably the officiating minister would have been William Lyon, Bishop of Cork, who as already mentioned had been chaplain to the Lord Deputy Grey.

All the details of the scene as it appeared to the eye of the Poet are enshrined in his bridal song, that most beautiful of all wedding odes. He draws a picture of the throng of people in the street waiting to catch a glimpse of this pretty golden-haired bride who was to wed the Lord of Kilcolman, the Secretary to the Council of Munster, a recipient of the Queen's favour, England's most famous poet. It was an important occasion. She was but "a countrey lasse," it is true, in that she was not town-bred, or a court lady, but he challenges the wealthy merchants' daughters to produce her equal. She comes

Clad all in white, that seemes a virgin best.
 So well it her beseemes, that ye would weene
 Some angell she had beene.
 Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre,
 Sprinckled with perle, and perling flowres atweene,
 Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre;
 And, being crowned with a girland greene,
 Seeme lyke some mayden Queene.

¹⁶ A strong tradition still exists in Cork that the poet had, at this period, a town residence in one of the aristocratic laneways off the Queenes Majesties St., and that his marriage did take place in Christ Church.

Timid, shy, abashed by so many on-lookers this long-wooded maiden takes her place before the high altar, while the "roring Organs" played a lively accompaniment to the joyous anthem of the choristers. "The sacred ceremonies . . . The which do endlesse matrimony make," having been concluded, Spenser bears his wife to Kilcolman in triumph, for those four short years till the opening of the flood gates.

Safe within the shelter of their home did some foreshadowing of the future seize the Poet? Did some uneasy vision rise before him of that dreadful night when across the moat would swarm those that famine had spared, when his home and all that he had gathered with such care would go up in flames to the skies? Some foreboding, whatever it was, caused him to pray that at least on this their wedding night they might be kept safe.

Let no false treason seeke us to entrap,
Nor any dread disquiet once annoy
The safety of our joy;
But let the night be calme, and quiet some,
Without tempestuous storms or sad afay;

Let no lamenting cryes, nor dolefull teares
Be heard all night within, nor yet without:
Ne let false whispers, breeding hidden feares,
Breake gentle sleepe with misconceived dout.
Let no deluding dreames, nor dreadfull sights
Make sudden sad affrights.

But it was not alone the too-material dwellers of the wooded fastnesses that were to be feared, there were also those supernatural denizens of the hollow hills. Irish folklore had a goodly collection of these mysterious beings, who became specially active, and not always for good, during the hours of darkness. Perhaps the Pouca and other evil sprites, and the many hobgoblins whose names he did not understand, had no existence, but it was as well to invoke the protection of Night against them too ! It was the sixteenth century when belief in magic and witchcraft was still strong ; and if the Lord Deputy Sidney, safe in his castle of Dublin, could suggest sorcery and enchantment as an explanation of the escape of a redoubtable enemy,¹⁷ one need not be surprised at some involuntary tremors in a poet who lived so largely in a realm of fancy. When the moon rose, silvering these fairy-haunted hills, and playing strange pranks of light and shade, the Poet desired no more echoes from those woods !

The present aspect of the country round this home to which Spenser brought his bride gives no idea of its charm in those days when Old Mole still wore his "oaken Gírlond," and most of the land was cultivated. Even when the havoc of war had ruined crops and homesteads, its fame was still sufficient to excite the cupidity of settlers. These hoary mountains, with their historic glens, the

¹⁷ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 137.

sparkling musical waters that tumbled down from the summits, even their forests, grew dear to the heart of the Poet, and many appreciative references, direct and indirect, are to be found to this neighbourhood throughout his pages.

In *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*, he celebrates, under the title " Old Mole," the chain of mountains that cross the country from the vicinity of Buttevant to Cahir, and which includes the Galtees, as well as the Ballyhoura Hills. Both groups figure largely in Irish song and story. Both were connected with the ancient gods of Ireland, and with the warriors of the heroic age. Both were famed in the pages of history down to that day when the ill-fated Earl of Desmond unfurled his standard of revolt at Ballyhoura, and gave to the gentlemen-adventurers their opportunity. The name that Spenser gives this chain is taken from a very ancient name, not of this range, but of the Slieve Bloom Mountains (Slieve Smól).¹⁸ The identity of Smól is lost, but he was evidently one of the legendary giants that are numerous in the ancient lore of Ireland, hence, Old Father Mole.

This Old Mole has a beautiful daughter named Mulla, otherwise the Awbeg River, which rises in the Ballyhoura Hills, and is a tributary of the Blackwater. From her name Spenser makes a fanciful derivation of Kilnemullach the older name

¹⁸ Smól Mac Eidleair. (Standish O'Grady: *Silva Gadelica*, Vol. II, pp. 203, 211.)

of Buttevant, an ancient city once remarkable for the number of its churches, the remains of many of which were still to be seen in Elizabethan times, when its

. . . ragged ruines breed great ruth and pittie
To travellers, which it from far behold.

From her name also he derives Armulla Dale, a name he gives to the valley of the Blackwater shut in by the Ballyhoura Hills. The first syllable he takes from Armoy, the Anglicised form then used to designate the barony of Fermoy. But the Awbeg was never known as Mulla, except to Spenser; the contemporary English name for it was the Narrow Water, in contradistinction to the Broadwater or Blackwater, and for the same reason it retains to the present day its Irish name Awbeg or Little River.

The poet keeps the name of the Bregoge river, as the meaning of the Irish word (deceitful) enables him to weave a pretty fancy to explain the junction of that river with the Awbeg. Bregog loved Mulla, but her father intended to match her with "the neighbouring flood Which Allo hight, Broad-water called farre." Bregog eluding Old Mole's watchfulness, steals underground and joins his beloved Mulla—a reference to the fact that in part of its lower course the river sinks out of sight for about two miles, leaving its channel dry, except in wet

weather. The anger of Old Mole on learning of the trick accounts for the rocky portion of the river's bed, for he hurled down mighty stones to impede its passage.¹⁹

The Allo is a tributary of the Blackwater,²⁰ but Spenser is referring not to the tributary but to the main stream—"Strong Allo tumbling from Slewlogher." The Blackwater, not the Allo, rises in Slieve Loughera.²¹

In the first of the two cantos of *Mutabilitie* the gods appear again on Galteemore, or "Arlo Hill That is the highest head (in all mens sights) of my old father Mole," to try the claims of the Titanesse. But the gods that the Poet puts on this Irish mountain are not deities known to Irish tradition. He transfers there the classical figures that would have been familiar to his English readers.

Spenser points out that the gods had forsaken Arlo Hill since Irish rebels took to hiding there. Diana used to hunt in these hills, till angered by the foolish wood-god Faunus, she not only deserted the place, but cursed it, hence "foul Arlo." The effect of the curse was that this

¹⁹ The Irish name of the river is said to be derived from the fact that it is liable to sudden and dangerous floods.

²⁰ In Nicholas White's *Journal*, and in other State Papers of the time, it is called the Broadwater.

²¹ A moorland district in Kerry.

The Allo may have been in ancient times the name of the main stream, and thus the Irish antiquarian Dr. O'Donovan explains Mallow or Moyallo—the plain of the Allo.

best and fairest hill
That was in all this holy Islands highs
Was made the most unpleasant and most ill

and the goddess quite forsook

All those faire forrests about Arlo hid,
And all that Mountaine, which doth over-looke
The richest champain that may else be rid;
And the faire Shure in which are thousand Salmons
bred.

Them all, and all that she so deare did lay;
Thence-forth she left; and parting from the place,
There-on an heavy haplesse curse did lay;
To weet that Wolves,²² where she was wont to space,
Should harbour'd be and all those Woods deface,
And thieves should rob and spoile that Coast around:
Since which those Woods, and all that goodly Chase
Doth to this day with Wolves and Thieves abound:
Which too-too true that lands in-dwellers since have
found.

What a plague spot the wood of Aherlow was to the English at this period may be gathered from the number of references to it in the *State Papers* of the time. Its proximity to the glens and caves in the neighbouring mountains, the marshy nature of the ground, the dense undergrowth, made it a most serviceable fastness for the outlawed Irish. During the Desmond rebellion it was one of their principal retreats, for in addition to providing shelter and

²² Cf. Derrick on fauna of Ireland.

security it was convenient to the rich lands of the Golden Vein. After the Munster Plantation was accomplished, it became a vantage ground from which to attack the colonists, hence the last line in the above quotation, and the references in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* to "nightly bordrags," (raids) and "outlaws fell (that) affray the forest raunger."

But when he is not writing poetry Spenser would employ a garrison of 200 to deal with "the curse," so as to control all those paths by which the "theeves . . . convaye theyr stealthes from all Mounster downwarde towards Tippararye, and the English Pale also up into Mounster, whereof they use to make a common trade."²³

The Poet does not propose to destroy the Irish woods, but to open them up by cutting a wide path of a hundred yards through them, so as to make a safer roadway for travellers. He loved the forested heights, and it is to the same woods in the neighbourhood of his home that he turns on his wedding day inviting them to share his joy and gladness. It is a pretty idea, but he gives a greater proof of his affection in naming his son and heir Sylvanus.

After that disappointing visit to London in 1589, Spenser represents, with charming exaggeration, all nature round his dwelling as rejoicing in his return :

²³ *View*, p. 668-9.

Whilest thou wast hence all dead in dole did lie:
 The woods were heard to wail full many a sythe,
 And all their birds with silence to complaine:
 The fields with faded flowers did seem to mourne,
 And all their flocks from feeding to refraine:
 The running waters wept²⁴ for thy returne,
 And all their fish with languor did lament:
 But now both woods and fields and floods revive,
 Sith thou art come, their cause of meriment.

When he brought home his bride she is received into the sisterhood of the local nymphs, being now the "lass" of their own special poet. She is honoured on one of the neighbouring hills which Venus had made her own, for that goddess too is captivated by the verdant heights of this land of changeful skies.

It was an hill plaste in an open plaine,
 That round about was bordered with a wood
 Of matchlesse hight, that seem'd th' earth to dis-
 daine;

In which all trees of honour stately stood,
 And did all winter as in sommer bud,
 Spredding pavilions for the birds to bowre,
 Which in their lower braunches sung aloud;
 And in their tops the soring hauke did towre,
 Sitting like King of fowles in majesty and powre:

And at the foote therof a gentle flud
 His silver waves did softly tumble downe,
 Unmard with ragged mosse or filthy mud;

²⁴ This explains the reference in *F. Q.*, Book iv, c. xi, to:
 Mulla mine, whose waves I whilom taught to *weep*.

Ne mote wylde beastes, ne mote the ruder clowne,
Thereto approch; ne filth mote therin drowne:
But Nymphes and Faeries by the bancks did sit
In the woods shade which did the waters crowne,
Keeping all noysome things away from it,
And to the waters fall tuning their accents fit.

In addition to describing the two rivers that were connected with his estate, Spenser also dwells affectionately on two other tributaries of the Blackwater—the Fanchion or Funcheon, with its tributary, the Molanna, which has been identified as the Behanagh. This river is formed high up in the Galtees by two streams—the Carrigeen coming from the Carrigeen Mountain, and the Coolatinny rising in the Bull Hill. After traversing “a pleasant Plaine” in the last mile of its course, it joins the Funcheon. The “grove of Oakes high-mounted” is gone, and so are the “many woods and shady coverts” of its lower course, but the stones with which the other nymphs at the command of Diana overwhelmed the faithless one are still to be found in its bed. The name of this tributary is made by adding the last part of Behanagh to Mole from whence it comes. Thus all the fictitious names that the Poet employs for the natural features of the district are connected with and derived from his mountains of Mole.

References to the scenery of other parts of Ireland are not so plentiful, nor so intimate. The marriage

of the Thames and the Medway gives him an opportunity of introducing some of the Irish rivers, in attendance on the bridegroom.²⁵ With the exception of the Shannon, which he had ample opportunities of observing at Limerick, he does not refer to any Connaught river. It has already been noticed that his acquaintance with this province was slight.

The identification of the rivers to which he gives an Irish or a fictitious name has been worked out by more than one Irish writer.²⁶ Most of the names present no difficulty; Swift Awniduff is the Ulster Blackwater, not the Munster Blackwater, which we saw he calls Allo; the Liffar or Liffer was the name used by Anglo-Irish writers of Spenser's day for the Foyle, its Irish name being Leithbhearr; the "baleful Oure" represents the Avonbeg flowing through Glenmalure, where Spenser doubtless witnessed that disaster to the English army in 1580; and "sad Trowis that once his people over-ran," is the short river Drowes, commonly called Trowis in Elizabethan times when it formed even as now, the boundary between Ulster and Connaught. Spenser's description of this last river shows that he was acquainted with the legend of Lough Melvin. According to tradition, many centuries before the Christian era, the sudden rise

²⁵ Bk. iv, c. 11.

²⁶ See Dr. Joyce in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1878; or *Wonders of Ireland*, pp. 72-114.

of the Drowes, overwhelming the land and people, turned the valley into a lake.

There still remains to be identified the "stony Aubrian." It has been suggested²⁷ that Spenser means the Urrin in Co. Wexford. This river is a tributary of the Slaney, and in an Inquisition of August 27th, 1610, Sir Henry Wallop was given the fishing of Slane and Orrin, as belonging to Enniscorthy, a manor which had been at one time in the possession of the poet. The river in its course flows over a rocky stony bed. But even granting that Spenser prefixed the Irish *abha* (river), the identification is not altogether satisfactory. It is, however, most likely that it is somewhere in this south-eastern area, as it is mentioned in the same line as the Slaney.²⁸

One of the features of the Buttevant district that interested Spenser was the number of ancient monuments to be found there. He had examples in his neighbourhood of Kilcolman of "round hills and square bawns, anciently places of assembly";

²⁷ Dr. W. H. Grattan Flood in *C. H. & A. Jour.*, vol. xxii.

²⁸ It may have some connection with the Siol Brain, a people formerly settled in the region of the Harbour of the Three Waters (Waterford Harbour), and who gave their name to the barony of Shelburne in Co. Wexford. In Vallancey's *Collectanea*, Vol. III, it is stated that the united stream of the Barrow, Suir and Nore was anciently called after this people, Breoghan or Abhan Braghan, but no authority is given for the statement. If it is correct, then "stony Aubrian" might have been used by Spenser to designate this estuary. Waterford Harbour has an extensive bar about a mile wide, which during the prevalence of southerly gales is covered with large stones.

memorial heaps whether of earth or stone ; ancient sepulchres ; huge Gallauns “ which some vaynlye terme the old Gyaunts Trivetts ” ; and the old Irish lisses and raths, which he calls Danish forts. He projected a volume on the Antiquities of Ireland,²⁹ but unfortunately it never appeared.

The customs of the countryside also engaged his attention, and several pictures of contemporary Ireland are enshrined in the *View*. On the highway between Cork and Limerick, stragglers, “ rabblementes of loose runnagates ” were continually passing up and down. Card and dice players, news-carriers, jesters and all such he views with strong disapproval, for he shrewdly suspects that these occupations may often be used as a cloak for furthering designs against the English. For the same reason he advocates the abolition of boleying or moving with herds from pasture to pasture in the mountains and wild places. The Irish in short must suit their manners, customs and dress to the requirements of the English.

Scattered throughout the later books of the *Faerie Queene* are several little sketches depicting the placid life the poet lived at Kilcolman. Many of these sweet, calm pictures bring relief in the midst of scenes that are either horrifying or disgusting. Various touches show us the energetic farmer busied with his flocks and his crops, up betimes

²⁹ *View*, p. 683.

when " the faire Morning clad in misty fog did shew " ; growing weatherwise and rejoicing in the fiery sunset glow that betokened heat, or noting the signs of rain coming with " the watry Southwinde from the seabord coste." Down under the alders on the Mulla's banks his cattle seek for shade " where shrouded they may lie," their long tails swishing away the flies. We see the careful husbandman pruning the fruitless branches, for this was a famous orchard country, and

a withered tree, through husbands toyle,
Is often seen full freshly to have florisht,
And fruitful apples to have borne awhile,
As fresh as when it first was planted in the soyle.

And does not this little picture from *Mutabilitie* suggest his Elizabeth occupied with her household duties ?

Like as an huswife, that with busie care
Thinks of her Dairy to make wondrous gaine,
Finding whereas some wicked beast unware
That breakes into her Dayr house there doth draine
Her creaming pannes, and frustrate all her paine.

But it was not all work. The aristocratic pastime of hawking may have provided relaxation for his leisured moments, for Ireland at the period was famous for its hawks, which were valued so highly

that they were sent as gifts to princes and nobles.³⁰ Derrick mentions eight varieties bred in Ireland. There were other amusements, equally diverting, if not so fashionable :—

Sometimes I hunt the Fox the vowed foe
Unto my Lambes, and him dislodge away;
Sometime the fawne I practise from the Doe,
Or from the Goat her kidde, how to convey:
Another while I baytes and nets display
The birds to catch, or fishes to beguyle;
And when I wearie am, I downe doe lay
My limbes in every shade to rest from toyle,
And drinke of every brooke when thirst my throte
doth boyle.³¹

Though he puts these, and the sentiments that follow, into the mouth of Meliboe, they might well be his own, for by this time he had settled down at Kilcolman with a certain amount of resignation, if not with content.

The time was once in my first prime of yeares,
When pride of youth forth pricked my desire,
That I disdain'd amongst mine equall peares
To follow sheepe and shepheards base attire:
For further fortune then I would inquire;
And, leaving home, to roiall court I 'sought,
Where I did sell my selfe for yearely hire,
And in the Prince's gardin daily wrought:
There I beheld such vamenesse as I never thought.

³⁰ The hawks of Ireland, called Goshawks, are much esteemed in England, and they are sought out by many and all means to be transported thither.—Fynes Morison.

³¹ Bk. VI, c. ix, st, 23 ff.

With sight wherof soone cloyd, and long deluded
 With idle hopes which them doe entertaine,
 After I had ten yeares my selfe excluded
 From native home, and spent my youth in vaine,
 I gan my follies to my selfe to plaine,
 And this sweet peace, whose lacke did then appeare:
 Tho, backe returning to my sheepe again,
 I from thenceforth have learn'd to love more deare
 This lowly quiet life which I inherite here.

But he was not cured, and the

expectation vayne
 Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away

took possession of him again, and he bewails them anew in the *Prothalamium*, written during his next visit to London, in 1596, when he was arranging for the publication of the second three books of the *Faerie Queene*, as well as of the *Foure Hymnes*. He dates the dedicatory epistle attached to the latter from Greenwich, but whether he was staying there or with his latest patron, the Earl of Essex at Essex House, formerly Leicester House, is uncertain. During this stay in England, he also wrote or corrected his *View of the Present State of Ireland*.³² Of the duration of the visit we have no information. All that is known for certain is that he returned to Ireland sometime in 1598.

³² *View*, p. 609.

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER IRISH INFLUENCES AND ALLUSIONS

THUS far we have been considering mainly the impressions that Spenser gathered from the scenery round his home, but it is evident that the whole circumstances of his Irish career must have influenced his work. To calculate the extent to which his life in Ireland affected his poetry would be impossible, and it would be idle, as Dean Church points out, "to speculate what difference of form the *Faerie Queene* might have received if the design had been carried out in England and in the society of London." Much of its wealth of imagery would undoubtedly have been lacking, many of its dramatic incidents would never have occurred to his imagination, and it would have become even more unreal and unconvincing. At the same time there is a tendency to exaggerate the effect produced in his writings by the chaotic state of Irish conditions at the time. Life in Ireland was not all anarchy and violence, and though Spenser passed through some of the most critical years of the Elizabethan period, he was not a military man, and there is no reason to believe that his life was ever endangered, till the

rising of the Northern chiefs spread all over the country. The fact that he wrote most of his works in Ireland, and had time and opportunities for social amenities is sufficient evidence that life flowed, on the whole, peacefully in his Munster home. Besides we have his own testimony, for he says that, as the result of Grey's administration, Ireland had twelve or thirteen years of peace.¹ Spenser, moreover, was not the only Englishman of letters who served in Ireland and wrote there, and some, like Sir John Harington, have given favourable impressions of Irish conditions. Racial animosity, though it became more acute after the Munster plantation, was not always strongly in evidence; the line of demarcation was rather between those who were on the Queen's side and those who were against her. English and Irish could, and usually did, meet on equal and friendly terms when their loyalty was given to the same cause.

The Renaissance tendency to explore every avenue of learning would have led these English writers in Ireland to make acquaintance with Gaelic literature. Some knowledge of it would have been necessary for those who, like Spenser, aspired to be considered authorities on the manners and customs of the Irish. Much of the old literature was available in the sixteenth century, when the influence of the bardic schools was still active. A

¹ *View*, p. 617.

poet who borrowed material from every available source would not be likely to neglect this storehouse, and many of the scenes in Spenser that have been considered as pictures of contemporary Ireland are in reality borrowings from Irish literature dealing with the heroic age, or with the early Christian period. This mass of material which he had at hand is usually ignored by writers on Spenser.

About 1578 the Lord Chancellor Gerrarde complained that "all the English, and the most part with delight, even in Dublin, speak Irish, and are greatly spotted in manners, habit and conditions with Irish stains."² He was probably referring to those who had been born in the country, but those who had served for any length of time in Ireland would at least have understood the language, even if they could not speak it. Elizabeth herself made an attempt to learn it, and the primer prepared for her by Sir Christopher Nugent, Baron of Delvin, is still preserved.³ Native music was carried across the Channel, and Irish songs were sung at Court. Altogether there is some evidence to show that the widespread interest in all literature, so characteristic of the period, did induce Englishmen of culture, living in Ireland, to make some attempt to study Irish literature.

There can be no doubt that Spenser devoted some

² *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 130.

³ *Facsimiles of Nat. MSS. of Ireland*, pt. iv (1), ed. J. T. Gilbert, p. xxxv.

time to this study. He confesses as much. He had often listened to the recitals of the story-tellers, and he had had several Irish poems translated to him that he might, as he said, understand them. This, it may be remarked is in no way incompatible with his possessing, as he undoubtedly did, after long residence in the country, a knowledge of the spoken language. The bardic schools favoured a cryptic style, and many archaic forms and words were employed in their compositions, for they were bound by very strict linguistic traditions. If Spenser knew Irish poetry only in translation, then he was in no position to pronounce an opinion on anything but the ideas contained in the poems, he would have been ignorant of the beauties and intricacies of the metres, and the melody of the verse would have been quite lost in the translation. But he seems to have gone deeper than a mere translation.

One of the most striking characteristics of Irish bardic verse is its musical quality, and to this even clearness is sometimes sacrificed. In Ireland the art of poetry had reached a high standard of perfection long before the other vernacular languages of Europe had discovered its rudiments. Centuries before the Renaissance many of the so-called innovations in verse-structure used at that period had been known and practised in Ireland; centuries before Spenser started his rhythmical experiments the bardic schools had their canons of

metrical perfection.⁴ Most of his innovations were tried after he came to Ireland, and while some of them are due to Italian or French influence, it seems unlikely that a poet with such an intense appreciation of the beauty of sounds would have been unaffected by Irish poetry, or that he would not have made some attempt to capture the secrets of the mellifluous cadences of Irish verse. These poems, he says, "savoured of sweete witte and good invention, but skilled not of the goodly ornaments of Poetrye, yet were they sprinkled with some prety flowers of theyr owne naturall devise which gave good grace and comlinesse unto them. . . ."⁵ The rhyme was a vowel one in many of the poems and, this would not have appealed to an English ear. Leaving this aside and "the sweete witte and good invention," which are probably the quaint conceits, what are "the prety flowers of theyr owne naturall devise" but the distinguishing characteristics of the native verse? These same devices were framed to suit poetry that was always recited aloud or sung, and where a melodious quality was essential. To ensure this, every trick of sound such as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia and internal echo rhymes had long been used in bardic compositions. All these devices are to be found in Spenser's own *Colin Clouts Come Home*

⁴ Introduction to Sigerson's *Bards of the Gael and Gall*.

⁵ *View*, p. 641.

Again, written when Ireland had become his settled home. A mere coincidence, perhaps, but one worth noticing.

There can be little doubt that Spenser learned many things from his instructor in Irish verse, who may have been Lord Roche's bard, Tadhg, whose dealings with the poet the nobleman had resented so forcibly. But if the two poets were infringing the new English law, which prevented anyone from getting lodgings in another man's house,⁶ Tadhg was acting strictly in accordance with the ancient bardic custom, for an Irish poet's house, from very olden times, was open to all literati, and not for one night only, but for as long as they wished to partake of his hospitality. The bardic profession was richly endowed, and an Irish poet had land and other allowances. Even in the Elizabethan period when wars had made a serious drain on their resources, Spenser was struck with the high esteem in which the Irish held the art. In the *View* he complains that forty crowns would be paid for a bardic poem addressed to a person of high degree, and he evidently looks on such appreciative recognition with a little envy. It was a practice he would have wished adopted in other quarters. In the *Ruines of Time* he gives more than one hint to that effect.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 623.

(D 678)

But such as neither of themselves can sing,
Nor yet are sung of others for reward,
Die in obscure oblivion, as the thing
Which never was, ne ever with regard
Their names shall of the later age be heard,
But shall in rustie darkness ever lie,
Unles they mentioned be with infamie.

Provide therefore (ye Princes) whilst ye live,
That of the Muses ye may friended bee,
Which unto men eternitie do give;
For they be daughters of Dame Memorie
And Jove, the father of eternitie,
And do these men in golden thrones repose,
Whose merits they to glorifie do chose.

But in his attitude towards Irish literature, as towards other Irish questions, Spenser was faced with a difficulty. He desired to stand well with the authorities, and his own private opinion was not always the official viewpoint. The bards as the custodians and teachers of the history of the country were regarded with suspicion by the English government. They were looked upon as inciters of rebellion, for by the recital of the old heroic romances, and by the laudation of a chieftain's mighty deeds, and of those of his warrior ancestors, they were supposed to inflame the national pride, and spur the Irish to defy the English. Derrick's testimony on the point is worth quoting, crudely as it may sound :

Now when their guts be full
then comes the pastyme in:
The bards and harper mellodie,
unto them doe beginne.
This barde he doeth report,
the noble conquestes done,
And eke in rimes, shewes forthe at large,
their glorie thereby wonne.
Thus he at randome ronnethe
he pricks the rebells on;
And shewes by suche externall deeds
their honour lyes upon.
And more to stirre them up,
to prosecute their ill;
What great renowne their fathers gotte,
thei shewe by rymying skill:
And thei most gladsome are
to heare of parents name;
As how by spoyling honest menne,
thei wonne such endlesse fame.
Wherefore like gracelesse graftes
sprong from a wicked tree,
Thei grow through daily exercise
to all iniquitie.

Spenser in describing the Masque of Cupid⁷ pays a tribute apparently unwillingly, to the Irish harpers and poets. Doubtless he had heard them at entertainments given to the Lord Deputy by some of the important personages of Anglo-Ireland.

⁷ *F.Q.*, Bk. III, c. xii.

With that a joyous fellowship issewed
 Of Minstrales making goodly meriment
 With wanton Bardes, and Rymers impudent

All which together song full chearefully.
 The whiles a most delitious harmony
 In full straunge notes was sweetly heard to sound
 The feeble sences wholly did confound
 And the frayle soule in deepe delight nigh drownd.

But the English official view of all this class is to be found in an order issued by the Lord Chancellor and Council of Ireland in 1579, that harpers, bards and rhymers were to be executed by martial law,⁸ and in the Articles of Plantation where the Undertakers were forbidden to "receive into their habitations, retain or lodge any Irish rhymers, bards, harpers or such idle persons."⁹ After his carefully expressed admiration of the structure of Irish verse, Spenser the poet moralist, with one of his touches of complacent conceit, throws his sop to government in regretting that these poems should be "soe abused to the gracing of wickednesse and vice, which would with good usage serve to beautifye and adorne vertue." He had already admitted their influence, for he says, "evill thinges being decked and suborned with the gay attyre of goodly woordes, may easely deceave and carrye away the affection

⁸ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 179.

⁹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 313.

of a yong mind ”—an argument which might be applied with equal force to some of Spenser’s own pictures, which, though meant to instil a hatred of vice, are unlikely to have that effect owing to the seductive character of the drawing. But he explains exactly what he means by the “gracing of wickednesse and vice” in Irish poetry. It is the setting up and glorifying in rhyme of “the most bold and lawless in his doings, the most daungerous in all partes of disobedience and rebellious disposition.” His objection to the bards was, therefore, purely political—he feared their anti-English influence.

To understand why this class of Irish literature caused so much uneasiness to the authorities one has only to turn to some of the contemporary poetry in which such appeals are made. The “Address to Brian O’Rourke, Chief of Brefny,” to arouse him against the English,¹⁰ furnishes a good example. Its author, Tadhg Dall O Huiginn, survived Spenser, and as this poem was written about 1566, the English poet may have been conversant with its sentiments. It would certainly have been circulating in Ireland during Spenser’s time. Probably he also knew the plaint of O Gniamh, bard of Shane O’Neill, on the “Downfall of the Gael.”¹¹ The strong plea that it makes for unity and concerted

¹⁰ Eleanor Hull : *Poem Book of the Gael*, p. 169.

¹¹ Written about 1560, trans. by Ferguson.

action would be likely to cause some misgiving to the government.

Though the bulk of the later bardic poetry that has come down to us consists of adulatory verse, and though the poets depended in part on rewards received for such efforts, nevertheless, at times "their encomiums include shrewd and healthy political advice deftly expressed in terms of formal panegyric,"¹² a device which Spenser should have regarded sympathetically. Often the style was more independent, as may be seen in the poem by Tadhg O Bruadin, addressed to Donagh O'Brien,¹³ 4th Earl of Thomond, who was made chief of his clan in 1580; or in the protest that O Heoghusa, the bard of the Maguires of Fermanagh, addressed to his chief, when insisting on his rights.¹⁴ No English poet of the time would have used to his patron language displaying such freedom and spirit, for no English poet would have felt that belief in his assured position that was the natural attitude of an Irish bard; and no Irish poet would have been guilty of Spenser's absurdity of praise, and have likened his chief to the Godhead.

But let us turn to the older bardic lore. Some of the earliest literature of Europe was to be found in Ireland. A mass of tales and old legends, much

¹² *Poems of Tadhg Dall O Huiginn*, Vol. I, trans. by Miss E. Knott.

¹³ Sigerson's *Bards of the Gael and Gall*.

¹⁴ Trans. by O. Bergin, *Studies*, Vol. XII, p. 80.

of it purporting to be history, had been handed down by tradition from a very early age, and in writing from the sixth or seventh century. This ancient material consisted of both prose and verse, and was grouped in three main cycles. The first was concerned with the gods of Erin ; the next, the Red Branch cycle centred round Cuchullin ; and the third dealt with Finn Mac Cumhall and his warriors. Munster is the scene of most of the tales of this third cycle. In addition there were other independent stories. In the sixteenth century the Finn saga had ousted the northern series from popular favour and was then the most widespread.

In a country where learning was deeply appreciated and carefully fostered, the absence of printing did not interfere to a great extent with the dissemination of these cherished legends. Every man of learning had to know them, and the office of scribe was at all times an honourable and honoured calling in Ireland. In spite of all the manuscript material that has been lost or carried abroad in the course of time, there still remains sufficient to fill several hundred volumes, and the great bulk of these manuscripts are older than the twelfth century, or are demonstrably copied from pre-twelfth century MSS.^{14a} Before the destruction of the bardic system, consequent on the overthrow of the Gaelic social organisation in the seventeenth century, the

^{14a} A. Nutt : *Cuchulain, the Irish Achilles*, p. 2-3.

number of manuscripts in existence must have been enormous. Many of the older and more valuable ones were collected by Englishmen serving in Ireland, and have thus found their way into the public libraries of England. Carew possessed several, and probably Spenser also acquired a few.

These old epics and romances are full of picturesque details and forceful similes, and there is a strong probability that Spenser borrowed something of both. The Poet's fondness for similes taken from the ways of hawks has been often remarked. He shared it with the bards, as he does the frequent images that he draws from angry bulls. One of the most striking characteristics of the Irish poets was their love and keen observation of nature. It pervades all the literature. Here again they had much in common with the English poet.

Spenser had no great creative imagination, but he had for a striking picture a marvellous and instant appreciation, coupled with a retentive memory of it. Actual scenes or the visions called up before his mind by what he heard or read were all stored up for future use. An argument or the sequence of events he might forget, for he was not a deep thinker, but a spectacle that unrolled itself before his eyes persists. It is to this strongly developed pictorial sense that we owe such extraordinarily vivid presentments as that of the famine scene in Munster when he had lost the sharpness of his impressions

of the interview between the Lord Deputy and the Spanish-Italian garrison at Smerwick.

Before attempting to conjecture what amount of knowledge Spenser could have had of ancient Irish literature it is necessary to call attention to one or two points. The Poet loves to pose as the typical, widely-read man of deep learning, which was the ideal of the Renaissance, consequently he wishes his readers to understand that he had made a close study of the ancient chronicles of Ireland, though he later confesses, when discussing Irish poetry, that he could not read them at all. But having, as he says, compared them with ancient and modern writings and added his own observations, together "with comparison of times likewise of manners and customes, affinity of woordes and names, properties of natures and uses, resemblances of rytes and ceremonyes, monumentes of churches and tombes, and many other like circumstances" he gathers "a likelihood of trueth," "a probalilitye of thinges,"¹⁵ which the reader may believe or reject as he pleases. But in spite of this formidable array of evidence he adds little to what had already been written by other Anglo-Irish authors, and where he is most original he is frequently unreliable, owing to his narrow and superficial knowledge. His attempt, for instance, to prove some of the most thoroughly Irish families to be of English extraction is, if not

¹⁵ *View*, p. 626.

an acid pleasantry, a curious blunder, since these same chronicles that he professed to know could have furnished the contradiction. We may conclude then that he had not studied the manuscript history, and his observations on the subject are of little or no value, and he is not the " well-eyed man " that he insinuates himself to be.

But many of the old fanciful legends connected with the colonisation of Ireland were widely known, and had passed into the folk-lore of the countryside, and these Spenser would have known. Topography and ancient myth are very closely connected in Ireland, and the names of many of the natural features of the country enshrine the memory of those far-back tales of Erin. With the English of the Tudor period, the study of antiquities was fashionable, and it is nothing unusual to find a military correspondent stopping in the middle of his despatch to discuss the derivation of an Irish place-name.

Spenser knew of the Irish conception of Ireland as a fair lady, Banba, taken from the cycle of the gods—though to suit the temper of his English readers he equates the name to Banna or *sacra insula*, and translates it as accursed. Under the name of the Cretan goddess Britomartis, he typifies England, and there is no character in the *Faerie Queene* on whom he bestows more pains and care. She is the embodiment of the might of Britain, the model of chastity, though she loves Artegall. Little

remains of the Gaelic Olympic cycle, and we have no portrait of the fair Banba, we only know she dwells for ever in the Kerry mountains of Slieve Mish. But Macha, the Irish goddess of war, who was also a pattern of chastity and rejected the love of men till she was wooed and married by a king of Ulster, appears armed like a warrior for battle, with her red-gold hair gathered into her helmet. It is true that Spenser's Britomart may be drawn from Boadicea and classical sources, but her portrait is a possible result of Irish influence.

During those days in the Dingle Peninsula, when Grey and his company were awaiting the arrival of the fleet, Spenser, like Nicholas White on the previous expedition, probably interested himself in some of the local tales. The Kerry coast is connected with many of the legends that circle round the coming of the early colonies. It is even to-day very fascinating to archæologists, owing to the number of very ancient remains that are to be found there. On this coast, it is said, two of the sons of Milidh or Milesius lost their lives. The ship of Ir, with its freight of warriors, women and children, struck against the crags of the Skellig Rocks, and all perished miserably in the fury of the waves. The grave of this warrior is pointed out on the top of the Great Skellig. The vessel of the other son, Donn, ran on the shallows near some islands, and all on board likewise perished. In early Christian

times too, the district was not less famous. Several hermits retired to the inhospitable islands round the coast, and the great St. Brendan, the Navigator, who had his monastery close to Smerwick, set out from the Dingle Peninsula on that marvellous voyage of his to the earthly paradise.¹⁶ He has given his name to two heights and a bay in the neighbourhood. Other voyagers, such as Maelduin, likewise sailed from here. It would be surprising if Spenser were ignorant of, and unaffected by, those well-known old legends. There is, however, the strongest probability that the scenery and associations of this part of the island suggested to him the setting for Sir Guyon's voyage in search of the Bower of Acrasia, and consequently, it may be worth while to take that canto xii. of Book II and analyse it, in view of this supposition.

Sailing from the Kenmare River, the Inver Sceine of the legends, up to Smerwick, the first danger one encounters is Ballinskelligs Bay, which has been the grave of many a noble ship. Spenser aptly calls it the Gulfe of Greedinesse. If a navigator escaped it, he was in peril of striking the Skellig Rocks on the other hand. The Little Skellig is the Rock of Vile Reproach. It is practically inaccessible owing to the deep turmoil of the

¹⁶ Though there were several similar tales, *St. Brendan's Voyage*, seems to have been the one that was most widely known in the Middle Ages. It had been translated into a great many European languages.

waters round it, and all kinds of sea-fowl find an undisturbed nesting-place on its crags. Passing these two dangers the next is the Blaskets—the many Wandering Islands. They are twelve in number, including some which are mere rocks, but Inis Beg contains 16 acres of rich grazing land. It “seemd so sweet and pleasaunt to the eye That it would tempt a man to touchen there.” Here sat that dainty damsel the laughing Phaedria tempting them to land—evidently the Island of Joy of the Irish legends. Then comes Blasket Sound, “the perlous passage.” Along this treacherous part of the coast there are dangerous eddies near the islands, “the whirlepoole of hidden jeopardy,” and sudden transitions from deep to comparatively shallow water, “the quicksand nigh with water covered.” The goodly ship which they see in difficulties would have been no unusual sight, and recently this coast had proved disastrous to some of the galleons of the Spanish Armada, one of which became a total wreck in or near the Sound. Clear of these dangers they encounter the full force of the Atlantic when they endeavour to round the headland, and “the surging waters like a mountain rise.” Here the poet wanders off into the regions of the legendary voyages, and they encounter the dreadful sea-monsters, who are subdued by the magic touch of the Palmer’s staff. Having left behind the mythical Island of Wailing, rounded

Sybil Point, and passed the headlands of the Three Sisters, they come to the Mermaids' Harbour, or Smerwick Haven, where there is practically no stream of tide :

. . . it was a still
And calmy bay, on th' one side sheltered
With the brode shadow of an hoarie hill;
On th' other side an high rocke toured still,
That 'twixt them both a pleasaunt port they made,
And did like an halfe Theatre fulfill.

The Three Sisters suggests the five siren mermaids of the bay. The eastern one of the three elevations is 490 feet high, and forms the western point of the entrance, "an high rocke." On the other side Mount Brandon rears its ancient head, "the brode shadow of an hoarie hill." The Spanish fort was on a rock on the north-west side.

Spenser must have heard all the dangers of this Kerry coast discussed between cautious old Admiral Winter and the more impetuous sailors like Richard Bingham, but when Sir Guyon and the Palmer leave the Mermaids' Bay, the poet is no longer on sure ground, and he grows vague, a convenient fog arises, and there are no details to identify the landing-place. Grey's expedition to Smerwick would have marched by Castlemaine, not by the northern shore of the Dingle Peninsula. Like Pelham and Ormond, they probably returned by the Lakes of Killarney, or Lough Lene, the name

then in use. The extraordinary beauty of the scenery of this district excited wonder and admiration even in those days, and it is quite possible that Spenser had it in mind when painting the beautiful Bower of Acrasia. Much of his description is taken from the usual account of the old Pagan paradise of sensual delights, common to the literature of several countries. Both expeditions would have entered this beautiful spot by the plain on the north, and have been struck with "the fayre aspect Of that sweet place," and viewing that wonderful combination of vale and mountain, groves and crystal waters, all crowned with the most luxuriant sub-tropical vegetation, a poet

would have thought (so cunningly the rude
And scorned partes were mingled with the fine)
That nature had for wantonnesse ensude
Art, and that Art at nature did repine.

In the drawing of the Genius of the Porch and the Comely Dame with the wine cup there may also be a Gaelic influence, as the same two figures are to be found in the story of the prophecy revealed to Conn the Hundred Fighter, when this old Pagan Irish paradise conception of the Plain of Honey or Delight (Magh Mell) was being used, under Christian influence, for didactical purposes.¹⁷ If it be

¹⁷ Extract from O'Curry's translation of the 15th century MS., *Baile an Scáil* (The Champion's Ecstasy). Harl. MSS., No. 5280, Brit. Mus.

"They went forward then until they entered a beautiful

objected that Spenser was not likely to know of an old Irish so-called prophecy, it may be pointed out that the English government found this class of literature very serviceable for purposes of propaganda, and used it on more than one occasion. Dozens of these spurious prophecies still exist in popular tradition, and among the *Carew MSS.* is to be found one which if not made by that statesman himself must have been instigated by him.¹⁸

In giving the name Verdant to the lover that succumbed to the charms of Acrasia, Spenser may have meant to imply that the warrior was an inhabitant of this luxuriant country, and that this scene is drawn from the Pagan Irish descriptions of the happy underworld. In these accounts it frequently happens that notable warriors are lured away to those regions of bliss by amorous fairy maidens; though intemperate love is not a dominant note in any of these tales, these happy regions provide the gratification of all the senses. Both in Phaedria's Isle and in Acrasia's Bower we get also

plain. And they then saw a kingly rath and a golden tree at its door; and they saw a splendid house in it, under a roof-tree of Findruiné; thirty feet was its length. They then went into the house and they saw a young woman in the house with a diadem of gold on her head; a silver kieve with hoops of gold by her and it full of red ale; a golden can on its edge; a golden cup at its mouth. They saw the Scál (champion) himself in the house before them in his king's seat. There was never found in Temair a man of his great size, nor of his comeliness, for the beauty of his form, the wonderfulness of his face."

¹⁸ E. O'Curry; *MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, pp. 389, 433-4.

one of the little touches that are a commonplace in Gaelic wonder tales—the magic birds that sang accompaniments to the human voice, or to an instrument. It was an idea that appealed to the Irish love of nature and of music.

This canto has been analysed thus fully to show the use that Spenser could make of local scenery and local legend, heaping magic on magic in the wonderful pictures he evolved out of them. In a study primarily historical, it is impossible to trace out in such detail, his other probable borrowings from Irish sources, and we must content ourselves with pointing out a few striking parallels from the other two cycles.

The Poet seems to have been an assiduous collector of the ancient folklore—the *View* alone would testify to that—and the localisation of persons and events which is so characteristic of the bardic tales would have facilitated him greatly. The northern half of Ireland, mainly, is the scene of the Cuchullin stories, of which the most remarkable and best-known tale is the *Táin Bó Cuailgne*, or the *Cattle Raid of Cooley*, an expedition that tradition places about the beginning of the Christian era, and the oldest extant version of which dates from about the year 1100. In a succession of single combats Cuchullin alone and unaided defends the province of Ulster against the forces of Medb (Maev), Queen of Connaught, and the armies of

the rest of Ireland. These fights at the ford supply a mass of vivid detail, but the most famous, the most enthralling, the most pathetic is the account of the combat between the Ulster Champion and his foster-brother, friend and old companion-in-arms, Ferdiad, who was inveigled by the wily Amazon Medb into attacking Cuchullin. No argument that she could advance moved him in the slightest till she threatened him with the satire of the Bards, sending "the Druids and the poets of the camp, the lampoonists and hard attackers (lit. the cheek blisterers) for Ferdiad, to the end that they might make three satires to stay him, and three scoffing speeches against him, to mock at him and revile and disgrace him, that they might raise three blisters on his face, Blame, Blemish and Disgrace, that he might not find a place in the world to lay his head, if he came not with them to the tent of Medb and Ailill on the foray. Ferdiad came with them for the sake of his own honour, and for fear of their bringing shame on him, forasmuch as he deemed it better to fall by the shafts of valour and bravery and skill than to fall by the shafts of satire, abuse, and reproach."¹⁹ In the *Faerie Queene*, Book VI, Canto v, Timias, the hero of another fight at the ford, and typifying, as it is supposed, Sir Walter Raleigh, actually experienced the attacks

¹⁹ The Ancient Irish Epic Tale—*Táin Bó Cuailnge*: trans. of Jos. Dunn, p. 218.

of these three great evils that Ferdiad dreaded—Despetto, Decetto, and Defetto, Spenser calls them. The Poet was aware of this fear of the satire of the bards, and refers again to it in the *View*.²⁰

When Spenser wishes to represent the struggle between Arthur, the personified England and Spain seeking to overthrow Elizabeth with the help of Ireland, he puts the Souldan fighting in a scythed chariot of the heroic age so familiar in the Cuchullin epic, in fact quite regardless of the anachronism, he often purposely selects one of these ancient figures when he has some Irish reference in view. We shall come on more of them warring with Elizabethan knights.

Passing on to the third and later cycle—that of Finn or Fionn the warrior son of Cumhal (Coole), it is to be noted that it is the one that he would have known best, for some of the place-names round the district where the Poet settled still enshrine an affectionate remembrance of its chief personages and incidents. Finn was nurtured in the wilds of Slieve Bloom, and later in the Galtees, having to be kept hidden from his father's enemies. He is visited at the age of six by his mother, who composes and sings for him a lullaby. A writer in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* suggests a parallel with the visit of Satyrane's mother to her son in the wood.²¹

²⁰ Page 640.

²¹ Rev. J. J. O'Carroll in No. 11 (Dec., 1880), in a series of articles on the Ossianic Tales.

The circumstances are similar, but while the babyhood of Finn gives rise to the tender addition of the mother's lullaby, young Satyrane is older, and already skilled in warlike arts.

When Finn grew to manhood he obtained command of the Fianna, a sort of native militia, who spent their leisure in hunting the wild boar or the stag. The mountains round Spenser's home had been the scene of many an exciting chase, and had often resounded to the blasts of the horns and the baying of those famous hounds that are enumerated with such precision in the tales of this cycle. On See Finn the wearied warrior rested, and beneath its shadow is Glenosheen, which commemorates his poet son, Oisín.

Like Cuchullin, Finn, who no doubt was a strictly historical personage, took to himself a semi-mythical personality in the course of ages. He became a slayer of dragons and savage reptiles. Even in England, Finn MacCool, the Giant, is not unknown. Hills figure largely in the Fianna lore, and owing to their association with the mountains, the corps came to have frequent and usually friendly relations with the fairies that dwelt in their mansions within the hollow hills. These were not the tiny creatures of English popular belief, but the people of the goddess Dana (Tuatha De Danaan) former possessors of the soil of Ireland. Being vanquished by the people of Milidh, and disdaining to live in

subjection, they retired under ground. At times they come out to seek mortal lovers, or mortal help in emergencies, as in the case of Bebhionn (Vivion) who, bethrothed against her will, fled to Finn for protection when he was in the neighbourhood of the Ballyhoura Hills. Having been kindly received, "she doffed her polished gilded helmet all bejewelled, and in seven score tresses let down her fair curly golden hair, at the wealth of which when it was loosened all stood amazed." Had Spenser this picture in mind in painting the great amazement of the on-lookers when the unarming of Britomart released her wonderful red-gold hair and proved her a woman?²²

Belphœbe, caring for Timias in the "faire Pavilion scarcely to be seene" recalls another of these Tuatha De Danaan, the grateful lady tending Caeilte of the Fianna, in his rich bed in the hidden "house of arms," after he was wounded in the battle with their enemies. She restores him by her skilful use of "certain herbs," which she shredded in a mash-tub of crystal.²³ And here too, Spenser makes use of the local colouring, for Belphœbe's house of healing is evidently situated on the wooded heights of the Ballyhoura Hills, overlooking the

²² *F.Q.*, Bk. III, c. ix.

²³ Trans. by Standish O'Grady: *Silva Gadelica*, Vol. II, p. 252.

" spacious plaine," through which " a little river plaide Emongst the pumy stones." ²⁴

But though these earth deities were usually beneficent, there were some unpleasant characters among them. A chief of the Tuatha in Sligo churlishly resented the Fianna hunting in his neighbourhood, and sent his three hags of daughters to take vengeance on them by luring them to the enchanted Cave of Keshcorran, where the warriors were entangled and held prisoners in magic threads. These three hags would seem to be the originals of Envy and Detraction, the two vile hags that attacked Artegall. The three sisters had " coarse heads of hair all dishevelled ; their eyes rheumy and redly bleared ; their three mouths black and deformed, and in the gums of each evil woman of them a set of sharpest, venomous and curved fangs ; their three bony-jointed (*i.e.*, scraggy), necks maintaining their heads upon those formidable beldames ; their six arms extraordinarily long, while the hideous and brutish nail that garnished every finger of them resembled the thick-butted, sharp-tipped ox-horn ; six bandy legs . . . supported them, and in their hands they had three hard and pointed distaffs." ²⁵

One more example of Spenser's skilful blending

²⁴ *F.Q.*, Bk. III, c. v, sts. 39 & 40.

²⁵ Trans. by Standish O'Grady: *Silva Gadelica*, Vol. II, p. 343-4. Spenser had previously (Bk. I, c. 4, st. 30) made Envy masculine.

of a borrowed picture, his experiences, and his own fancies, will be sufficient. The stories that have come down to us, even from ancient times, contain descriptions that show very careful observation. The *Book of Munster* has a legendary account of the Battle of Magh Mucruimhe, which is computed to have been fought about A.D. 195. Here we have a curious picture of an armourer's forge in the depths of a forest. "This great abode was not, however, a place of entire ease and rest," owing to the activities of the pupils and apprentices, which are given in detail.²⁶ Spenser paints the House of Care as a smithy in a cottage where Sir Scudamore took refuge when overtaken by darkness in a driving storm of wind and rain. Many a time, when on the march Grey's servants must have been glad to appropriate for the Lord Deputy "whom greatest Prince's Court would welcome fayne" the shelter of one of these little cottages hidden away in unexpected places. The Poet wisely refrains from details as to what was being made in this smithy of his, but he puts a master and six apprentices working there, though it was only "a little cottage like some poor man's nest"—obviously a blunder caused by the blending of two distinct pictures.

Whatever incidents Spenser may have taken from the native literature, he has made very little use of

²⁶ O'Curry: *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, p. cccxxxiv, trans. by O'Donovan.

Irish names. They would have been strange to the English audience for whom he wrote. But the hero of Book V gets an Irish name, a sort of symbolically Irish garb, Finn Mac Cumhal's banner device on his shield, and a magic sword. Guaire the Hospitable, a famous king of Connaught in the seventh century, had a son Arthgal, the ancestor of the O'Clerys, O'Hynes, and Mac Gilla Kellys.²⁷ As the genealogy of Irish chieftains was a matter of deep interest to Elizabethan statesmen, and also, as the *View* shows, to Spenser, he certainly came across the name. But even if he had never heard it, the combination of *Art*, an Irish name translated by the English Arthur, with *Gall* would have suggested itself to him. He knew that the Irish called Dermot MacMurrough *Diarmuid na Gall*,²⁸ and that the usual term for an Englishman was *Gall* (a foreigner)²⁹—in fact it was a word well-known to all the English in Ireland.³⁰

As to the garb of this Salvage Knight, it was "full hard to be descride," but it was fit for "a savage wight," and was covered over with woody moss, and the trappings of his horse were of oak leaves.³¹ His shield "bore the Sunne brode blazed in a golden field,"³² and the motto "salvagesse sans

²⁷ *Journal R. Society Antiquaries*, Vol. IV., 6s. p. 123.

²⁸ *View*, p. 659.

²⁹ *View*, p. 628.

³⁰ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1595-99), p. 440.

³¹ Bk. IV, c. iv, st. 39.

³² Bk. V, c. iii, st. 14.

finesse." The magic sword given him by Astraea is called Chrysaor. Though the name is derived from the identical Greek word, it is possible the Poet had in mind a secondary derivation. The word *Christ* united with the Irish word *saor*, a workman or artificer, would give a hidden meaning which would delight the colonists, and appeal to Spenser particularly, for Grey's policy for Ireland, had he been given a free hand, would have been a Mahomedan conquest. His sword would have done the work of Christ, and when he failed to bring Elizabeth round to his views, he wrote dejectedly to Walsingham, "Baal's prophets and councillors shall prevail. I see it is so. I see it is just. I see it past help. I rest despaired."³³

The other names that occur are Ferraugh, a shortened form of a name then common—Feradach; and Brianor and Briana, which he makes from Brian. Dr. Grosart is convinced that Spenser got the name Una in Ireland. Perhaps he did. He may have heard during that first visit, of the Una who was queen of the fairies of Ormond, and the double meaning would have appealed to that love of the covert allusion that characterised the Elizabethans.

Minor references in Spenser to contemporary Ireland are hard to trace. When the Poet came over in 1580, he had some part of the *Faerie Queene* written, as we know from Gabriel Harvey's letter

³³ Froude: Vol. XI, chap. xxvii, p. 242.

referring to it.³⁴ By about 1584 the work must have been well advanced, judging by the reference at Ludowick Bryskett's party. In Book I there is no direct allusion to Ireland, but it is quite possible that little pictures taken from Irish scenery were added to it before publication. The description of the Wood of Error in the first canto may well have been written after he made acquaintance with the thick forests of the south and south-west. It is an expansion of a passage taken from Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*, and has been objected to as untrue to nature, because so many trees could not have grown together in a thick wood.³⁵ But Sir Valentine Browne, in his survey in 1584 of the Wood of Glenageenty, where the Earl of Desmond was slain, mentions oak, ash, hazels, sallows, willows, alders, birches, whitethorns, *and such like* as growing there together in the underwood. The wonderful luxuriance of growth in the south-west of Ireland could have suggested such a description to Spenser. With the exception of the olive and the myrrh there is no tree mentioned in that passage that could not have been found in these woods.

In the second Book there are two direct references. The Poet's residence at New Abbey, near Kilcullen, Co. Kildare, close to the Bog of Allen would account for the first—a simile in Canto IX, stanza xvi. :—

³⁴ Appendix II, Globe edit., p. 710.

³⁵ Kitchen : *F.Q.*, Bk. I, p. 164.

As when a swarme of Gnats at eventide
Out of the fens of Allan doe arise.

The Passage in which it occurs—the attack of the Passions on Guyon—may be a scene out of the Englishman's Ireland. It is reminiscent of the uncomplimentary pictures drawn in Derricke and kindred writers. The thousand villains with outrageous cry, and the rocks and caves adjoining, suggest an Irish setting,³⁶ for the Irish battle cries were a subject of great alarm and astonishment to the English. Spenser refers to them in the *View*.

The second direct allusion—"Jett or Marble far from Ireland brought"³⁷—comes probably from his having seen specimens of Irish stone in some of the newly-constructed wealthy homes of England.

The Poet's campaigns with Grey furnished him with much material both in scenery and in pictures of war, but while references to war conditions are to be found scattered throughout most of the *Faerie Queene*, they are more plentiful in the later Books when Spenser was recalling many of the incidents of the journeyings with the Lord Deputy. He hears again the "noyse of many bagpipes shrill And shrieking Hubbubs," the storming by "continual battery," the thunder of the three great guns "that makes the wals to stagger with

³⁶ Kitchen: *F.Q.*, Bk. II, p. 216. The author suggests a bye allusion to the outbreaks of the "villenage," who, with the rude weapons of the field, attacked the feudal castles.

³⁷ Canto IX., st. 24.

astonishment," the newsmen panting out the latest tidings good or bad, those nerve-racking alarms by night in the towns with their watchers on the walls; again he sees the pictures of the sudden attacks and the fleet-footed kerne flying to woods and bogs, the pursuing English unable to overtake them; or that woeful figure of a man "in wretched weedes disguised, With heary glib deform'd and meiger face, Like ghost late risen from his grave agryz'd"—no unfamiliar sight on that dreadful march into famine-stricken Munster. The whole situation, with its ever-present anxieties preventing rest by day or night, suggests the idea of a House of Care.

From an Irish historical point of view the Fifth Book is the most interesting, as it contains the Legend of Artegall or Justice, under which figure Spenser portrays his patron Lord Grey. While the identification of many of his characters is extremely difficult, if not impossible, he lays aside most of the vagueness of allegory in dealing with this statesman and paints him almost without disguise. He is the Salvage Knight—the adjective is equivalent to Irish in Spenser—come to rescue Irena, or Ierna, which was the name used for Ireland by some of the classical writers.³⁸

³⁸ This is the name under which Ireland appears in the Greek writer Poseidonos, who flourished about 150 B.C. It represents the old name, Iverna—McNeill: *Phases of Irish History*, p. 133-4. Claudian and Strabo use this same name. Ptolemy calls it Iuernia, Solinus has Iuerna.

The object of Grey's appointment is thus poetically expressed :—

(It) was to succour a distressed Dame
Whom a strong Tyrant did unjustly thrall,
And from the heritage, which she did clame,
Did with strong hand withhold; Grantorto was his
name.

Wherefore the Lady, which Irena hight,
Did to the Faery Queene her way addresse,
To whom complayning her afflicted plight,
She her besought of gracious redresse.
That soveraine Queene, that mighty Empresse,
Whose glorie is to aide all suppliants pore,
And of weake Princes to be Patronesse,
Chose Artegall to right her to restore;
For that to her he seem'd best skild in righteous
lore.³⁹

Then follows a fanciful account of his training in justice, and of his peculiar fitness for this grave enterprise.

The Ireland of Spenser's sympathies here is loyal Ireland—the natives and their rights do not enter into his consideration.⁴⁰ The Lady Irena accordingly does not typify the Banba of the bards, but England's loyalists struggling in afflicted plight against somebody or something called Grantorto. This "strong tyrant" has been identified as either Philip II of Spain or Desmond's rebellion.⁴¹

³⁹ Bk. V, c. i, st. 3-4.

⁴⁰ Except perhaps in the case of the Salvage Man in Bk VI, c. v, st. 30.

⁴¹ Church: pp. 128, 129.

Before dealing with these allegories it is necessary to utter a word of warning against any attempt at a too rigid interpretation of them. As Spenser has double and even treble allegories it is difficult to fix definite interpretations of his characters. He introduces a personage with some feature or in the midst of some circumstances that seem to settle the meaning, and then no sooner does the identity seem clear than the picture blurs, and the likeness is lost. This transformation may be intentional, as a too vivid portrayal or a too close identification might be unwise and dangerous, especially in the case of a personage of distinction, or in circumstances closely connected with matters of state. Spenser in his description of the trial of Duessa before Mercilla,⁴² drew an easily identified portrait of Mary Queen of Scots, which reflected so seriously on her character that James VI sent a protest to the English ambassador against the insult to himself and to "his mother deceased," and "he desireth that Edmund Spenser for this fault may be duly tried and punished." The affair, however, seems to have blown over.⁴³ But this was one of the few

⁴² Bk. V, c. ix, st 38 et seq.

⁴³ *C.S.P.Scot.*, Vol. II, pp. 723, 747.

An Irishman named Walter Quin, learned, courtly, and well-travelled, and who was later tutor to James's son, proposed to answer "Spenser's book," but the King was offended at the suggestion, for his protest does not seem to have been sincere. Very likely it was connected with the Buccleugh affair of Kinmont Willie, a popular Scottish freebooter who was carried off by the English on a day of border truce, and lodged in Carlisle Castle. He was rescued by "the bauld

cases, like Lord Grey's, where the Poet willed the identification. Usually he is more casual, his interest in his story carries him away, and most critics, owing to the difficulty of fixing the meaning, have preferred to leave his political allegories severely alone. Sir Walter Scott lamented that "although everything belonging to the reign of the Virgin Queen carries with it a secret charm to Englishmen, no commentator of the *Faery Queen* has taken the trouble to go very deep into those annals, for the purpose of illustrating the secret, and, as it were, esoteric allusions of Spenser's poems."⁴⁴ And after another century and a quarter of study, aided by published *State Papers*, the same difficulties exist. There are many references now elusive, but which were probably plain enough at the time he wrote, and it was because some of them were sufficiently definite to cause offence, that the Poet protests against the attempt to read more into his poems than he had ever intended to convey.⁴⁵ But an indefinite picture had its advantages, for it enabled him, when he so pleased, to explain any character that required identification, or else, when

Buccleugh," who assaulted the castle. Elizabeth was extremely angry, and insisted that Buccleugh should be surrendered to her. It is likely that James's protest was a set-off against Elizabeth's, and that Spenser's offence came in conveniently.

⁴⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. VII (1805), p. 214. Quoted from H. E. Cory.

⁴⁵ *Colin Clout*: Ded. Epistle: *Faerie Queene*, B. VI, final stanza.

circumstances called for prudence, he could disclaim any hidden meaning. Such subtle vagueness was necessary in an age when vengeance was easily provoked.

But to return to Artégall and his mission—Spenser does not put any Spanish colouring into the picture of Grantorto, whereas there are many details pointing to an intended Irish figure, and consequently it is likely that the Poet intended to typify the Desmond rebellion rather than the King of Spain. This “strong Tyrant,” moreover, does not occur in any of the previous Books of the *Faerie Queene*, and seems to be connected with the period when Grey was Deputy. Spain attacking England through Desmond’s rebellion was the special problem that the Deputy was sent to deal with in Ireland. Grantorto is represented as a giant, owing to the formidable strength of the rebellion, and the possibilities that lay behind it. This redoubtable antagonist was accoutred in Irish fashion,

And on his head a steele cap he did weare⁴⁶
 Of colour rustie-browne, but sure and strong;
 And in his hand an huge Polaxe did beare,
 Whose steale was yron-studded but not long,⁴⁷
 With which he wont to fight to justifie his wrong:

in short, a warrior of the period, who fought with an

⁴⁶ Cf. Derrick :—“ With sculles upon their poules, insteade of civill cappes.”

⁴⁷ Specimens of ancient weapons, short and broad, and attached to handles by large rivets are to be seen in the National Museum.

ancient weapon—probably the Catholic religion—but was vanquished by Chrysaor, the Sword of the Lord, with which Artegall strikes off the head of “the cursed felon.” True to the policy of the English in asserting that they were saving the Irish from the cruel exactions of the Anglo-Irish lords, Spenser would represent the people as rejoicing in the overthrow of the Earl of Desmond.⁴⁸

Which when the people round about him saw,
They shouted all for joy of his successe,
Glad to be quit from that proud Tyrants awe,
Which with strong powre did them long time oppresse.

Grantorto being dead, Artegall with the help of Talus the “ yron man ” with the flail, who typifies the strong arm of justice, puts his ruthless policy into force,

And all such persons as did late maintayne
That Tyrants part with close or open ayde,
He sorely punished with heavie payne;
That in short space whiles there with her he stayd,
Not one was left that durst her once have disobayd.

During which time that he did there remayne,
His studie was true Justice how to deale,
And day and night employ'd his busie paine
How to reforme that ragged common-weale:

⁴⁸ The death of the Earl did not take place till after Grey's recall.

And that same yron man, which could reveale
 All hidden crimes, through all that realme he sent
 To search out those that usd to rob and steale,
 Or did rebell gainst lawfull government;
 On whom he did inflict most grievous punishment.

Envy and slander prevent this "good Lord"
 from finishing the work, and having been recalled
 to England,

His course of Justice he was forst to stay,
 And Talus to revoke from the right way
 In which he was that Realme for to redresse:
 But envies cloud still dimmeth vertues ray.
 So, having freed Irena from distresse,
 He took his leave of her there left in heavinesse.

It was only a poet turned politician who could have
 conceived the victim as mourning the departure of
 that "most gentell, affable, loving and temperate"
 governor, who had reduced her to a gaunt spectre
 of famine.

On his return to England Artegall is met by the
 old ill-favoured Hags—Envy and Detraction, the
 latter of whom levels at him the accusation

that he had with unmanly guile
 And foule abuson, both his honour blent,
 And that bright sword, the sword of Justice lent,
 Had stayned with reprochfull crueltie
 In guiltlesse blood of many an innocent:⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Spenser, forgetting that Radigund had broken Artegall's sword (Canto V, st. 21), uses it again in the killing of Grantorto, and of "many an innocent."

As for Grandtorto, him with treacherie
And traynes having surpriz'd, he fouly did to die.⁵⁰

And so the Blatant Beast or Slander egged on by the two hags begins to attack his character with its hundred tongues.

One cannot but admire Spenser's warm championship of his discredited patron, in face of the anger of Elizabeth and the attacks of the Court factions, though his intemperate zeal leads him to support what even his contemporaries considered an exceptionally cruel policy.⁵¹ As a poet he would have wished to close the adventure in true fairy-tale style, but "the times were out of joint," poetry and politics would not blend, and so he ends with an outburst of bitterness and scarcely veiled contempt for the government policy. Lord Grey died about the time when Spenser started the Sixth Book, and he drops the subject after introducing Sir Calidore's meeting with Sir Artegall, and reiterating his defiant admiration.

But it is not alone as the doleful Lady Irena that Ireland figures in the *Faerie Queene*. Spenser seems to have intended to portray this fair land also under the guise of the beautiful Florimell, the bride of the sea or rather of the triumphant sea-power of England. She has a false counterpart that deceives everyone, but melts away on being confronted with

⁵⁰ An allusion to the Smerwick incident.

⁵¹ *View*, p. 655.

the real Florimell. Marinell, her lover, at first represents the sea power of Spain. Britomart overcomes Spain on the Rich Strand or the Spanish Main, and Florimell flies from the Court. All the noble Knights of Maydenhead follow to protect her. She is pursued by Archimago or the Papacy, and also by Arthur, representative of English chivalry, but she fears equally the advances of both, her previous adventures having made her distrustful. Plots to gain possession of her are represented by the witch and her son. Having escaped from them she is pursued by a monster that grows greater in strife—probably disloyalty. Eventually she falls into the hands of Proteus (Spain), who keeps her imprisoned in “a sea-walled fort,” from which after long captivity she is released at the command of Neptune. Marinell then brings her back to Faery Land, and weds her at the Castle of the Strand—Smerwick. Her six champions, the chief of whom, Sir Orimont, obviously represents the Earl of Ormond, uphold her honour at the Tourney held in celebration of the event, and Artegall arrives just in time to save Marinell from defeat.

Though the enfranchisement of Irena was the special mission of Artegall, he meets with other adventures before he goes to her rescue, and many of these also have reference to Ireland, and deal with persons or incidents connected with the Grey administration, for the whole Book is intended to portray

him as the instrument of Elizabeth's justice.⁵² A fanciful but sinister legend attached to Strangcally Castle, on the Blackwater, is said to have supplied the details of Pollente's Bridge.⁵³ Whatever allegorical meaning Spenser intended to attach to the Sarazin, dead he bears a resemblance to Sir John of Desmond, who accompanied by his cousin James FitzJohn Fitzgerald, last Geraldine owner of Strangcally Castle, was ambushed by Colonel Zouche, near Castleyons. He was wounded in the throat, but Zouche hoped to bring him to Cork alive to stand his trial. He expired on the way. The corpse was brought to the city, where his head was cut off and sent to Grey as a New Year's gift in 1582. It was spiked on Dublin Castle, and the mutilated trunk was hung in chains on the North Gate of Cork, where it remained for nearly three years, till a high wind blew it into the river one stormy night. The grisly present to the Lord Deputy probably came to the Secretary's hands.

The fight between Artegall and Pollente takes place on a bridge with trap-doors, which, on being let down, precipitate the enemy into the water beneath. Locked in a fierce grip both fall into the river, and the struggle continues till Artegall strikes off the head of the other.

⁵² Bk. V. Arg. st. xi.

⁵³ Bk. V. c. ii, st. 7-9 : *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. 25, p. 21-23.

His corps was carried downe along the Lee⁵⁴
Whose waters with his filthy bloud it stayned
But his blasphemous head, that all might see,
He pitcht upon a pole on high ordayned;
Where many years it afterwards remayned,
To be a mirrour to all mighty men,
In whose right hands great power is containd
That none of them the feeble over-ren
But alwaies doe their power within just compasse pen.

Here we have another alleged oppressor of the people, like Grantorto.

Pollente begins as the power of Spain, and ends as Sir John of Desmond; his daughter the Lady Munera begins as the wealth of Spain, and as some of the Spanish treasure was used to finance the expedition to Smerwick, she seems to end up as that unlucky garrison, and is slain. The assault on the Fort of Gold (Dunanoir or Fort del Ore), the defenders begging for terms and being refused, Artegall's alleged pity for them, his unwillingness to interfere with the course of Justice which lay in the hands of Talus, the corpses thrown over the walls to the sands beneath to be washed out on the tide, are all incidents of that siege. In this second allegory of Spain fomenting rebellion in Ireland, his wife, Adicia, is representative of the Papacy.

The trap-door device appears again in the sixth canto in connection with the sleeping apartment of

⁵⁴ This is anticipatory, Castlelyons is near Fermoy.

the unsuspecting Britomart, and the Bridge of Pollente appears too in the same canto, when Dolon the deceiver plans with his sons the destruction of the Briton Maid, mistaking her for Artegall. If Dolon be taken as representative of the House of Desmond, then Guizor, the Groom of Pollente, slain in the first plot would be Fitzmaurice, though that event took place before Grey's coming to Ireland. The remaining two sons (Sir James and Sir John) are slain in connection with this second conspiracy, and again there is the reference to Sir John's body going over the Bridge and being swept away in the river. Dolon, the head of the House, is made their father, and his death, which occurred after Grey's recall, is not referred to here.

Just as Elizabeth, Spain, Rome, and the other chief interests of the day appear under different figures—so does Ireland. The Fifth Book contains a new female figure—Radigund the Amazon, who is hostile to all the Knights of Maydenhead. Under this guise Spenser must have intended to represent the Ireland that was in arms against England, and who was eventually killed by Britomart. She is quite a different figure to the sweet and gentle Florimell, or to the sorrowful Lady Irena. Here we have

A Princesse of great power and greater pride
And Queene of Amazons, in armes well tride.

Engaging in single combat with Artegall, this haughty warrior queen, so reminiscent in her splendour of that other Amazon Maev, is overcome, but her wonderful beauty causes the victor to weaken, she takes advantage of his admiration and pity, conquers him by guile, and his fame and honour suffer at her hands.⁵⁵ What was involved in the struggle between them is clear from the compact she makes with him :

But these conditions doe to him propound:
That if I vanquishe him, he shall obay
My law, and ever to my lore be bound;
And so will I, if me he vanquish may,
What ever he shall like to doe or say.⁵⁶

From this passage it is evident that Spenser realised that however much the issue might be obscured by the vacillation of some of the Irish, for the truly Gaelic Ireland it was victory and independence or else subservience for evermore to an alien government and tradition. Such views he never utters in his political tract, and it is the Poet too and not the politician who is seized "with pittiful regard" at the sight of the fair face of the country blood-stained and marred by combat, but still "A miracle of nature's goodly grace."

More than once Spenser finds this outlet in his

⁵⁵ Bk. V, canto v.

⁵⁶ Canto IV, st. 49.

poetry for feelings that politically would be out of place, and hence some of his most blood-thirsty sentiments of the *View* have their contradiction in the *Faerie Queene*, and this makes it doubtful as to which is his real opinion. Whatever licence he might claim in poetry, a political tract, if it was to serve his interests, could embody nothing contrary to accepted English policy, and hence the poet who wrote

“ For blood can nought but sin, and wars but sorrows
yield,”

has his name for ever linked in Ireland with exceptional cruelty. But it was the struggle in him of the poet against the politician, the effort to deal justly with what he was forced to admire, and at the same time bound to hate, that led him to make an appeal for the Salvage Man in Book VI.⁵⁷ May it not be that the Poet in one of his softer moods was dreaming of a peace that he typifies under the allegory of Serena, a gentle lady wounded on both sides by the Blatant Beast? She tries to establish friendly relations between the Salvage Man, or the ordinary people of Ireland, and Timias and Arthur, representative of the English Government in Ireland. The slanderous propaganda of both sides, tending to fan the flames of racial hatred, produces the wounds in Serena's sides.

⁵⁷ Canto V, st. 30.

But if Spenser the Poet had any such ideas, they were cast aside by Spenser the Politician, when on going over to England to publish this second part of his poem he again found himself in the atmosphere of imperialism, and becoming the opportunist once more, he presented to the Queen his *View of the Present State of Ireland*. Yet even in this tract intended to advocate an uncompromisingly stern policy, Serena lays her hand on him and he brings in again, most inconsistently, this idea of a rapprochement.⁵⁸

The presentation of this apology for officialdom was his last bid for advancement. He was, in acknowledgment, recommended for the shrievalty of Co. Cork.

When one thinks of this struggle of two warring personalities in Spenser one is not surprised at the increasing querulousness that arose from his failure to mould this world in which he found himself, nearer to his heart's desire, or rather to the heart's desire of Elizabeth and her Council. It is a pity, as Mr. Yeats puts it, that he did not come merely as a poet to this land "where the mouths that have spoken all the fables of the poets had not yet become silent. All about him were shepherds and shepherdesses still living the life that made Theocritus and Virgil think of shepherd and poet

⁵⁸ *View*, p. 675.

as the one thing ; but though he dreamed of Virgil's shepherds he wrote a book to advise, among many like things, the harrying of all that followed flocks upon the hills, and of all ' the wandering companies that keep the wood.' "

CHAPTER VI.

THE RUIN OF THE PLANTATION

IT was soon evident that the Plantation was not the success that had been anticipated. The Irish, who had survived the frightful years of the Geraldine war with its aftermath of famine, began to come back gradually to the vicinity of their old homes. The Undertakers, finding it difficult to procure English labour, were glad to get their services in cultivating the land, for they were "great plowers and small spenders of corn," and all prohibitions against employing them were forgotten. At the end of 1591 Mr. Solicitor Roger Wilbraham writes pessimistically of the whole project to Burghley, saying: "God grant her Majesty the due rents of the Undertakers, for I never expected the re-inhabitation with English, nor any benefit else of other the articles, since the Irish tenants are much more profitable than the English, and so I have informed you hertofore."¹ But while taking the Irish as tenants and labourers, the English in no way changed their arrogant attitude towards the real

¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 442.

owners of the soil, and continued to look upon them as wild beasts that should be exterminated.

Yet among the newcomers there was at least one who considered that the taking over of the land implied some obligations towards the natives. Sir William Herbert in Kerry realised that without due regard for religion, sincere and impartial administration of justice, as well as courtesy in dealing with them, the Irish would never be contented in these new circumstances. Even if the religion he provided for them did not meet with their approval, the dispossessed natives no doubt appreciated his good intentions, as well as the "courteous demeanour, affability of speech and care of their well-doing" which he advises, and without which he warns his fellow colonists they will make themselves odious and hateful to the Irish, and while thinking to gain much, eventually lose all.²

The fact that the Planters were not ingratiating themselves with the natives was well known already to the Queen and Council.³ Sir Thomas Norreys adds his testimony as to the disorders of these Undertakers, some having taken men's goods upon pretended challenges, refusing to deliver them upon sureties; others had entered into castles and lands where there was neither office nor any matter of record to entitle her Majesty to them, in fact, he

² *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 532, et seq. Views most probably his.

³ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 491.

concludes, they suppose themselves absolutely freed from all government.⁴ For those who, like Sir William Herbert, counselled conciliation there were only sneers and innuendoes. "If Sir William," writes Sir Edward Denny to Walsingham, "to gain himself glory and thanks among the Irish, plead for them more than is fit, let not us suffer for his humour. A Welsh humour and a fat conceit hath fed him foolishly."⁵ Having seen Munster turned into a desert by the might of English power, these English settlers, regardless of all warnings, went their way. The Irish had been taught a lesson they would never forget. Quite true, but how had they learned it? Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, full of doubts and fears, supplies the answer: "And sure I am by many woful experiences that the Irish after blood and murder is drawn and done upon them will never be reconciled, and will revenge with blood, if they may. Neither will they trust any that hath so dealt with them."⁶

The Irish, meantime, were not asleep, for all that Munster seemed so tranquil. Secret societies were being formed for the recovery of the lands. The Robin Hoods, as they were called, swooped down on isolated settlers whenever they got an opportunity, and either killed or drove them out. The most famous of these raiding parties were led by

⁴ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 111.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁶ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1588-92), p. 225.

the MacShees or MacSheehys, the well-known Gallowglasses, under their chief, Rory MacSheehy. Sir Thomas Norreys, writing to Cecil from Shandon Castle in 1596, relates that though he had hanged upwards of ninety of these raiders in ten days, and driven the rest out of the county, yet they had appeared again lately and committed many murders upon the English, who lived scattered in places of danger and in weak thatched houses, and could not be brought to dwell together. Ten "wood kerne" was enough to terrify all the Undertakers.⁷ This cursed crew, as he calls them, having been driven out of their homes, sought shelter in the woods where the English found it exceedingly difficult to follow, for the forest paths were rendered impassable by the plashing or interlacing of the boughs of the great trees with the abundant underwood. Kylemore, or the Great Wood; Aherlow, and the woods of Dromfynine on the Blackwater, were all used as places of refuge by the Munstermen during this period.

It may have been part of the Irish policy at the close of the sixteenth century to serve among the English. Such service was, in itself, nothing new, for all through these wars Irish soldiers fought both for and against Elizabeth, but they now began to fight in the English ranks in increasing numbers, and possibly of a set purpose. The nature of Irish

⁷ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1596-97), p. 161.

warfare had undergone a change, and it was imperative for the Irish to have modern weapons, and to be trained in their use. However, brave and capable the man that wielded it, an Irish battle-axe was not equal to an English gun. Though the Irish did not doubt that the expected foreign aid would eventually materialise, in the meantime arms and ammunition were essential. Hugh O'Neill might import lead under pretext of roofing his house, but such an expedient could not be tried more than once. During the last decade of the century the number of Irish serving in the English army of Ireland had grown out of all proportion to the number of English.⁸ Strange to say, while it was becoming increasingly difficult to secure men in England for the Irish war—and even when they were pressed into the service they were of little use, being unable to withstand its hardships—the Irish were not only willing to serve, but made excellent soldiers. Spenser adds his testimony to the general verdict on their valour and endurance. “ Yet sure they are very valiaunte and hardye, for the most part great endurours of cold, labour, hunger, and all hardiness, very active and stronge of hand, very swift of foote, very vigilaunte and circumspect in theyr enterprises, very present in perrils, very great scornors of death.” And furthermore he adds that not alone was the Irishman a brave and efficient

⁸ C.S.P.Ir. (1596-97), pp. 231, 429.

soldier in his native surroundings, but being quick to learn, "when he cometh to experience of service abroad, and is putt to a peece, or a pike, he maketh as woorthy a souldiour as any nation he meeteth with." This was the material the English were training in Elizabethan methods of warfare. Several times a note of warning is struck in official correspondence, and yet in 1597, one year before O'Neill's rising spread to the south, the English forces had become almost entirely Irish,⁹ the horse-men being all in effect Irish, and "of the worser sort of them"¹⁰—a phrase capable of more than one interpretation.

Meanwhile the Undertakers continued to make grants and assignments to the Irish and to take them on as tenants-at-will, in spite of Elizabeth's displeasure.¹¹ The natives could be forced to pay high rents, and the Irish labourers also proved more profitable than English workers. "There be no better earthtillers," it was said, "nor more obedient than they be."¹² Discontent was steadily growing, for apart from the grievances of the dispossessed tenants, the exactions of the army on the march alienated even the loyal subjects. Not satisfied with quartering themselves on the poor people, "the officers in every band would violently

⁹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1596-97), p. 188; (1598-99), pp. 64, 34.

¹⁰ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1596-7), p. 275.

¹¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1596-97), p. 329.

¹² *C.S.P.Ir.* (1586-88), p. 405-6.

urge their hosts every morning to give them three, four, or five shillings a piece ; to every soldier, 12d. or 2s. ; to every one of their women as much ; to every boy 6d. or 8d. at least. If they had it not, then they carried away for pawns, garrans, coverlets, mantles, sheets, and other household stuff, and sold them at their pleasure." When such continual extortion was practised even on the people of the Pale what hope was there for the "mere Irish" ? A captain's pay was not sufficient to support the extravagant mode of living then usual among the English, and so these officers preyed not alone on the inhabitants, but even on their own men, so as to be able "to buy them rich apparel, to maintain their pride and lasciviousness, their drunkenness and quaffing carouses, their tobacco and tobacco pipes." An English official on his return to England in recording these abuses, declares the plight of the people as "now so wretched and miserable, as the poor souls that are left have nothing else to feed upon but roots, grass and boiled nettles."¹³ No wonder Spenser has to complain that the Captains did not want peace, "for feare least afterwarde they should neede employment, and soe be discharged of pay."¹⁴

All the arrangements made to ensure the safety of the colonists had fallen through, and they were

¹³ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 208-209.

¹⁴ *View*, p. 648.

left a mere handful amongst a hostile people, who were only awaiting an opportunity to drive them out. But the Undertakers drifted along either unaware of, or unheeding the signs of coming danger, and relying always on the might of England, though Spenser, it is to be noted, was alive to what was in preparation, for he says :—" There is noe parte sounde nor ascertained, but all have theyr eares upright, wayting when the watchword shall come that they should all rise generally into rebellion, and cast away the English subjection. To which there now little wanteth ; for I thinke the woorde be allreadye given, and there wanteth nothing but opportunitye . . ."¹⁵

But even this keen observer does not seem to have realised that the opportunity also was at hand. He must have been back in Ireland by September 30th, 1598, for on that date the following official letter was addressed to the Lords Justices of Ireland :—" Though we doubt not but you will without any matio [?] from us, have good regard for the appointing of meete and serviceable persons to bee sheriffs of the several counties, which is a matter of great importance, especially at this tyme, when all parts of the Realme are touched with the infection of Rebellion, yet we thinke it not amisse sometyme to recommend unto you such men as we hold to be fitt for that office. Amonge whom we

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 650.

may justly reckon Edmond Spenser, a gentleman dwelling in the countie of Cork, who is so well knowen unto your lordships, for his good commendable parts (being a man endowed with good knowledge in learning, and not unskillful or without experience in the service of the warrs), as we need not use many words in his behalf. And therefore as we are of opinion, that you will favour him for himself, and of your own accord, so wee do pray you that this letter may increase his creditte, so favor forth with you, as that he may not faile to be appointed sheriff of the co. of Cork, unlesse there be by you known some important cause to the contrary, wee are persuaded he will so behave himself in the place, as that you shall have just cause to allow of our commendation and his good service. . . ."¹⁶

If the appointment to this onerous and important office was in the nature of official recognition of the *View of the Present State of Ireland* which had been entered, provisionally, for publication on the 13th of April of that year, it was certainly an appropriate reward. Spenser had dealt not alone with the government of Ireland in general, but with minor matters, such as abuses of the sheriff's office, as well.¹⁷ Here then was an opportunity to put some of his theories in practice.

¹⁶ Harl. MSS. Brit. Mus. (268, p. 272), quoted from *C. H. & A. Jour.*, 1st series, Vol. II., p. 345.

¹⁷ *View*, pp. 648, 649.

The position of sheriff was supposed to be bestowed only on those who had estates or appointments in the same county, and after the Desmond forfeitures many of the new landowners held the office. Spenser's neighbours, Arthur Hyde, of Carrig in edye (Castle Hyde), and Hugh Cuffe, of Newtown, as well as others, had so acted.¹⁸ Now that Burghley was dead—and he was supposed to have interfered with the Poet's advancement—this new appointment might have led to substantial promotion.

But Spenser was never officially elected, or if he was, he cannot have acted. The sheriff's accounts were cleared at Easter and at Michaelmas, but the fact that the rebellion reached Munster at the beginning of October,¹⁹ threw everything into confusion, and the Queen's recommendation would have been received at a time when it was impossible to give effect to it. Moreover, a letter of Sir Warham St. Leger's, of February 11th, 1583, in which he speaks of Sir Cormac Mc Teige "sheriff of this county till All-hallowtide last"²⁰ would suggest that it was on that date the sheriff went out of office. It is very probable that the position was only about to become vacant when Queen Elizabeth sent her recommendation. In the official list of sheriffs Spenser's name does not appear, the person

¹⁸ *Roy. Soc. of Antiq. Jour.* Vol. XV, p. 39.

¹⁹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 282.

²⁰ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1574-85), p. 428.

who acted for the year 1598-99 being Francis Newman, Esq.

After the battle of the Yellow Ford in 1598, the storm burst over Munster. For some time previously emissaries from the north had been going about the country organising the Irish to make a determined effort to rid themselves of the English. The Irish Council reported that Hugh O'Neill had thus made "dangerous impressions in the hearts of the people, who of themselves, are overmuch inclined to alteration, but specially being carried with the promise of restitution to their idolatrous religion and old vain titles of lands."²¹ The fact that an Irish army could defeat the English forces in the field, even without foreign help, put fresh heart into the waverers, and the effect throughout the country was electrical. The disaster came, however, as a thunderbolt to the English, and when a section of the Irish army under Captain Tyrrel, Sir Piers Lacy, and O'More of Leix, descended on Tipperary and Limerick, panic took possession of the Undertakers. Most of them fled at the first alarm, and took refuge, with the President of the Province and the Council, in the little walled town of Cork. Sir Thomas Norreys had certainly foreseen the trouble, and used his best endeavours to guard against it, but with Ulster as good as gone, revolt general in Connaught, and all Leinster in arms, the Lords Justices and the

²¹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 182.

Lord Lieutenant General were unable or unwilling to help him.²² At the approach of the Irish he had to fly from Kilmallock. His forces depleted by desertion were undisciplined and demoralised. The Irish on going over to the other side had taken their arms with them, and the English remnant ill-fed, ill-paid, were glad, in many cases, to sell theirs to the insurgents, or to the country people. They were little more than conscripts, and many of them deserted too, on the first opportunity.²³ As for the Irish that stayed with the English, Sir Henry Brouncker was of opinion that they were "the rascals," for "the men of most spirit follow the rebels."²⁴ But reinforcements were being hurried from England, though they did not arrive in time to save the Undertakers, who, expecting no quarter, fled before the danger reached them, leaving castles, houses, and goods to their enemies, as well as supplies of arms and ammunition. Except in three or four cases they made no attempt to save their possessions.

The insurgents must have reached Kilcolman about October 15th, as the barony of Buttevant was spoiled on that day.²⁵ Mr. Wayneman, a great sheepmaster, fled, leaving everything. Twenty families fled from Ballybeg, and Kilcolman was

²² Ibid. pp. 161, 270.

²³ Ibid., p. 307.

²⁴ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 288.

²⁵ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 288.

sacked and burned. Whether Spenser was present is not known, but tradition says his wife and children barely escaped with their lives. There is no mention of any of the family in the official reports. That some fighting took place there is to be inferred from the fact that Edmund MacSheehy, one of the famous band already mentioned, "was killed by an Englishman at the spoil of Kilcolman."²⁶ The *View of the State of Ireland*, written about two years before, was probably circulating in manuscript, as the custom then was, and rumours of the Poet's suggestions for their extermination had doubtless reached the ears of the Irish. They would not have been likely to spare his house. Nearly everything must have been lost, for very little of the property would have been portable. Sheep and cattle were straying round ownerless, and "in that trouble ye could buy an English mutton for 12d."²⁷

We have no record of any casualties among the Undertakers themselves or their families, but a contemporary document undated and unsigned says: "The meaner sort (the rebellion having overtaken them) were slain, man, woman, and child, and such as escaped came all naked to the towns. . . . Their moan was great, the sight lamentable."²⁸ From all parts of the country

²⁶ Ibid, p. 322.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 325.

²⁸ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 325.

around, even from Kerry, they poured into Cork, and many died from exposure in the mountains. The resources of the little town were taxed to the utmost, in fact, the citizens had to refuse a garrison, and undertook to defend their city themselves. Churches and other public places were placed at the disposal of the fugitives, who were in great misery and distress. Youghal too threw open its gates, but owing to the extent of its walls, the defence of the town was a matter of considerable difficulty, and alarms by day and night kept the inhabitants in continual panic.²⁹

Cooped up in Cork, then a small town of one street, were many Englishmen and all the officials of the province, with the exception of the Chief Justice Saxey, who "urchin wise afore presaging the mischief to come," escaped to England with his wife, family, and goods,³⁰ and then wrote, in the security of his own country, an account of the atrocities that he had not seen! There was the Lord President, who had got most of the blame, as he was the "first to run," discouraging thereby all the English round him, though in the recriminations that followed when all were safe in Cork, the blame was more evenly distributed. There was the Bishop of Cork, "loth to be a martyr," who forsook first "a strong

²⁹ Ibid, Henry Smith's Report, p. 331.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 325.

house all of stone, which he had at Ross in Carbery, and afterwards left a fine and a strong house he had without the walls of the city and fled into the city." The Bishop of Down was also obliged to take refuge in the town, as well as the Provost Marshal, the sheriff of the county,³¹ and Edmund Spenser.³² The losses of the English in three days amounted, it is estimated, to £40,000,³³ an immense sum in those days.

At the end of two months the distressed crowd were still in the city, "relieved by the citizens to their uttermost," though Sir Thomas Norreys, chafing at his enforced inaction, has no word of gratitude for the hospitality, and describes his benefactors as "an insufferable, disdainful, and insolent people, which were not meet to be borne with, had I means here to make them know the same."³⁴

Probably many discussions took place among these Undertakers and officials during their stay in Cork, and Spenser certainly would have taken his part, for he produced, either during his time spent there, or immediately after leaving the city, another political document, in which he bewails the fate that has overtaken him and his associates, and advises the Queen as to the proper course

³¹ Probably Edmund Gibbon.

³² *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 398.

³³ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 41.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 298.

to pursue. On December 9th, he left for London bearing a despatch to the Privy Council from Sir Thomas Norreys, and it was delivered at Whitehall on Christmas Eve.³⁵ His "Briefe Note of Ireland," which runs to ten pages, must have been presented at the same time, or very shortly after.

This second tract is addressed to the Queen, and opens with a most sorrowful plaint. Here we have the exaggerated language of the poet rather than the dispassionate tone of the official. The introduction is as follows:—"Out of the ashes of disolacion and wastnes of this your wretched Realme of Ireland, vouchsafe, most mightie Empresse, our Dred soveraigne, to receive the voices of a fewe moste unhappie Ghostes; of whome is nothinge but the ghost nowe left, which lie buried in the bottome of oblivion, farr from the light of your gracious sunshine; which spreadeth it selfe over Countries most remote, to the releeving of their destitute calamities and to the eternall advancement of your renowne and glorie; yet upon this miserable land, being your owne juste and heritable dominion, letteth no one little beame of your large mercie to be shed: either for unworthinesse of us wreches which no way discerve so great grace, or for that the miserie of our estate is not made knowen unto you, but rather kept from your knowledge by such as by concealement thereof

³⁵ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), pp. 401, 414.

think to have their blames concealed. Pardon therefore, moste gracious soveraigne unto miserable wrechcs, which without your knowledge and most against your will are plunged in this sea of sorrowes, to make there evell case knowne unto you and to call for tymelie redresse unto you, if yet at least any tyme be left which that your majestie in your excellent wisdomc may the better knowe how to redresse, may the same vuchsafe to consider from what begining the same first sprunge and by what late evill meanes it is brought to this miserable condicon which wee nowc Com-
plaine of."

Then he proceeds to trace the causes of the rebellion and to show how "the venom crept up" into Munster which had hitherto been exceedingly quiet. The 2,000 men sent by "the Traitor Earl of Tyrone" had in a few days grown to 5,000 or 6,000 who set upon, despoiled, and scattered the English.

Of the plight of those who escaped to the port towns he gives an eloquent but exaggerated picture:—There "they yet remain like most pitiful creatures naked and comfortless, lying under the town walls and begging about all the streets, daily expecting when the last extremity shall be laid upon them. Could your Majesties most merciful eyes see some parte of the image of these our most rueful calamities they would melt with

remorse to see so many souls of your faithful subjects brought hither to inhabit this your land, of the which many were the last day men of good substance and ability to live, others of very able bodies to serve your Majesty, now suddenly become so wretched wights and miserable outcasts of the world as that none of the country people here vouchsafeth to commiserate, but rather to scorn and approbriouslie revile them as people abandoned of all help and hope and exposed to extreme misery.”³⁶

But Elizabeth, enraged at the success of the Irish, and shamed by the cowardice shown by the Undertakers and Council of Munster had, we may be sure, little sympathy to spare, at the moment, for her colonists. She was in no mood, moreover, for poetic language. In those days the patience of her counsellors was being sorely tried. About a week before Spenser arrived in London, Sir Robert Cecil, writing to the Treasurer of Ireland, Sir Henry Wallop, says: “ But in these public misfortunes, and the continual vexations which that kingdom affords, you must pardon us that are public ministers, if we write sorely, being daily partakers of Her Majesties mislikes of all things that belong to that country, in which I cannot blame her.”³⁷

Into this atmosphere of anger and irritation,

³⁶ Original in P.R.O., London, quoted from Grosart, p. 537-555.

³⁷ *C.P.S.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 390-1.

where the very name of Ireland was hateful, came Spenser with his Briefe Note. What his reception was we do not know. Though Elizabeth had recommended him as sheriff of the county, he had played no notable part in the recent upheaval. The exasperated Queen was intent on being "revenged of these perfidious, unnatural and barbarous traitors" who had dared to rise against "a Princess that at the greatest monarch's hand in Christendom would never take any bravado, and therefore will much less suffer a herd of wild rogues to live unchastised."³⁸ But Spenser had no new suggestion to offer, he returns to his famine plan. The Lord President had advised that "the Irish should be constrained first to taste some great extremity, so as to settle them in a more assured and dutiful affection hereafter."³⁹ Spenser is more explicit:—"Great force must be the instrument, but famine must be the means, for till Ireland be famished it cannot be subdued."

The Poet considers the cause of the mischief in Munster to have been the inefficiency of the Plantation scheme, "for that more care was therein taken for profit and utility than for strength and safety." The Undertakers being a sort of husbandmen trained up in peace, and scattered in different places could not maintain themselves against a

³⁸ Ibid, p. 381.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 404.

people just emerging from a state of rebellion, who had not been disarmed, and who, moreover, profited not at all from "the civil example of the English," and "their daily conversing with them."⁴⁰

Spenser counsels Elizabeth to show "unto these vile caitiffs" the terror of her wrath. He piously hopes that God has put "this madding mind so generally into all this rebellious nation," to stir her to take vengeance on them. Lest she might not be so moved he proceeds to use arguments likely to affect her, ending on a note of shocked sorrow because the rebels in their common meetings and in their priests' preachings speak so wickedly of her Majesty.

Then follow the points to be considered in the recovery of Ireland. As these are substantially a repetition of his policy as expounded in the *View*, it is unnecessary to consider them separately.⁴¹

This unworthy document with its angry whining tone was his last contribution to the subject of Irish affairs. One can excuse and sympathise with the anger, but the exaggerated commiseration of

⁴⁰ If we are to credit another of the writers who offered explanations and remedies, neither the example nor the conversation can have been very beneficial, for those that had crossed the seas had not changed their dispositions, and many of them were immoral and unprincipled, and if the enemy by the permission of God, had not come with a scourge against them, the earth would have gaped and swallowed them up.—*C.S.P.Ir.* (1598-99), p. 429.

⁴¹ Quoted in full in Grosart, p. 537-555.

himself and the other sufferers repels, especially when it is remembered how little thought he had for the agonies of those they had supplanted. One would have expected a manlier tone from one "not without experience in the service of the wars."

In one short month after his coming to England this poet who had aspired to political reputation sank under the weight of his misfortunes, and died, according to Ben Jonson, for want of bread. Whatever poetic justice might have been in such a retribution, the statement is questionable. Temporarily embarrassed he may, and must have been, but at the time of his death he was a State messenger of no mean importance, and would have been amply paid for his services as were the more insignificant couriers.⁴² In addition there was his pension, and he had many influential friends who would not have seen him die of want. The Earl of Essex sent him twenty pieces, and though he may have realised that death was near, it does not seem likely that the Poet would have returned to his benefactor the churlish reply that he had no time to spend them.⁴³

Spenser died on January 16th, 1599, at Westminster,⁴⁴ and was buried at the charge of the Earl of Essex. In his first years of exile, when

⁴² A courier who took a letter from Dublin to London about the same time, got £10. *C.S.P.Ir.*, 1598-99, p. 474.

⁴³ Conversations with Drummond.

⁴⁴ Chamberlain's Letters. (Camden Society) Letter XV.

he was fresh to the horrors of a warfare that was waged unmercifully on both sides, and when the dismembered bodies, tarred and spiked heads of his enemies, met his eyes day after day, he had prayed :

Ah dearest God, me graunt, I dead be not defould.⁴⁵

Crushed by that land that fascinated while it angered him, he had, as it happened, returned to England in time to lay his bones among his own people, where every honour would be paid to his remains. After his hearse walked many other poets, who as he was lowered to rest in that quiet corner of Westminster Abbey, scattered over him a pall of mournful elegies, and cast into the tomb the pens that had written them.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *F.Q.*, Bk. I., c. x, st. 43.

⁴⁶ Camden's *History of Elizabeth*.

(D 678)

CHAPTER VII.

SPENSER AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

WHEN Spenser wrote of Ireland, it was, as Mr. Yeats puts it, out of thoughts and emotions that had been organised for him by the State, for he had begun to love and hate as it bid him. The predominance of the State is the all-pervading political idea of the sixteenth century, and Spenser does undoubtedly reflect it in his writings. As a poet he might sigh after the time-honoured institutions of chivalry, with its ideals of honour, gentleness, and courtesy, but when he becomes an exponent of English statecraft his thoughts are moulded by his time. Narrowminded and intolerant, all too anxious to accept the official point of view, he made no use of the opportunity that he had of forming an independent opinion on the claims of the Irish people. He diligently noted the political views of his own countrymen who were serving in Ireland, and the plan that he eventually puts forward for the subjugation of the country is the outcome, not of his own experience or thought, but of the discussions he has heard from time to time among English officials. "I do not deliver it," he says,

"for a perfect plott of myne owne invention, to be onely followed, but as I have learned and understood the same by the consultacions and actions of very wise Governours and Counsellours whom I have sometimes hearde treat of therof." Of all those that he met, Lord Grey exerted the strongest influence on his political opinions, and the policy that he learned from that nobleman he made peculiarly his own, and he advocated it steadily for the remainder of his life. Hence the similarity of the *Briefe Note* and the *View*. He either could not, or would not, learn anything from events.

It is because Spenser really *was* a gentle poet capable of higher feelings that one regrets the fact that his was the pen to place on record this unworthy exposition of violence. Though he was merely expressing the ideas of others, and hoping to make capital out of them, the odium for those opinions has fallen almost entirely on his own head, and he has received an undue proportion of the blame. Even that very idea of famine which is linked with his name was not peculiar to himself and his patron, Lord Grey.¹ Fire, sword, and famine were the favourite expedients of those serving in the Irish wars, and unlike the Poet of

¹ Ormond, for example, says: "In my opinion the speediest way to end this war will be by fire and sword, as I did end the former war with Desmond in Munster; which (their corn and houses being burned), did bring famine amongst them, and they were driven to eat one another."—*C.S.P.Ir.* (1599-1600), p. 430.

the *Faerie Queene* they never had any doubt of the efficacy of "fleshly force," but were consistently ruthless whenever the Queen decided on a policy of repression.

It would be difficult to decide in how far Spenser was sincere in his worship of the State, and in his adulation of Elizabeth. Mr. Yeats says: "He found it possible to be moved by expedient emotions, merely because they were expedient, and to think serviceable thoughts with no self-contempt." But that is not always true, for he could be, as we have already seen, amazingly scornful and wilfully blind to his own interests, in attacking an enemy however highly placed, or in defending a friend.² At such times he was apt to forget that he was looking for advancement and dependent on the favour of the great. Neither Queen nor State kept him silent when anger or irritation moved him to speak. He can hardly be regarded as a conscious hypocrite, and, on the whole, he is free from a good deal of the cant that characterised his age. If he was moved by expedient emotions, it was not always because they were expedient, but because he was one of a multitude, and all Europe was thinking more or less in the same strain. The reaction against the tyranny

² He had most unwisely made an enemy of Burghley by his biting satire in the fable of the Ape and the Fox (M.H.T.), and by other scathing allusions. The efforts he makes to disclaim such attacks are obviously forced and insincere.

of the crown was of slow growth, and did not come in his day.

The thoughts that influenced Spenser and his contemporaries must be traced back to the Reformation and the Renaissance. The modern state is the outcome of the Reformation, but only partly so. The ideas that obtained such prominence in the Tudor period were not new, they can be traced back to the Middle Ages, and thence to the ancient world, but "it was through the crucible of the sixteenth century that mediæval notions were passed before influencing the modern world."³ The notions of despotism and of divine right were not created by the Reformation, but the circumstances of the time gave to these ideas a new direction and predisposed men's minds to accept them.

In the Middle Ages all Europe was united—theoretically at least—in one society, the Church, with the State or civil authority as its executive arm. The Pope was the sole legitimate source of earthly power, the supreme judge among nations, even though that claim may have been contested at times. In the sixteenth century this idea of unity still persisted, but in a narrower way. Whereas the one society in mediæval times was the Church, with the revolt from the Papacy all such allegiance was transferred to the State,

³ *Cambridge Mod. Hist.*, Vol. III, p. 737.

together with the prerogatives hitherto claimed by the Church. Instead of all Western Europe being one, each of the states now became a separate unit, and each took on a divine origin. When the divine right of the State took the place of the divine right of the Church, the Prince took the place of the Pope, and became the centre of power, the embodiment of the glorified state and the object of national reverence; and thus, while men "professed Christianity in various forms, the State was their real religion, and the King was their great High Priest. They were consumed with the idea that the State was the end and crown of human endeavour; it was their idol and their ideal. It inspired them and they became its slaves."⁴

It was by virtue of her Divine Right that Elizabeth claimed the homage of her subjects, and the worship of such men as Spenser. In the exaggerated flattery that he pays her, the Poet may have been giving sincere expression to his idea of the Prince as the incarnation of the glorified State and the national ideals. Unless he looked on her allegorically, it is hard, as Mr. Yeats points out, to understand how Spenser could still talk of her in such terms of beauty, when she had grown ugly, capricious, and selfish. Gloriana was ageless, her beauty was unfading, for she was a

⁴ A. F. Pollard: *Factors in Modern History*, p. 77.

conception not a reality. He could not, of course, have adopted the purely lover-like attitude of the high-born courtier, and it is probable that such sentiments would not have appealed to him in any circumstances. He forgets the woman in the

Dread Soverayne Goddess, that doest highest sit
In seate of judgement in th' Almightyes stead,
And with magnificke might and wondrous wit
Doest to thy people righteous doome aread,
That furthest Nations filles with awful dread.⁵

Nothing could have suited Elizabeth better than this attitude on the part of her people. A goddess could do no wrong, consequently when things went badly the Divine Prince would be preserved from odium at all costs, and the human statesmen and commanders had to bear the blame, though the Queen did not always consult them, and even when she did, frequently acted contrary to their advice. Spenser could not, even if he would, have run counter to this universally accepted attitude, and so in any protest he utters there is never a shadow of complaint against the Queen personally; it is always her government or officers that are at fault.

Though the transference of allegiance from the Pope to the Prince was the result of a struggle partly religious and partly political, the Reformation ideals were not intended to be applied to ideas

⁵ *F.Q.*, Bk. V, Arg.

of purely political liberty, as the peasants of Germany found to their cost. It was a revolt against authority only in spiritual matters. But reform movements frequently send out waves that produce quite unforeseen storms, and arguments are sometimes applied to cases undreamt of by their author.

The effect of Luther's writings was undoubtedly revolutionary, and the reformers found it difficult to confine the conception of liberty to princes and divines. Ireland was affected by those ideas of freedom, and England was inconsistent and illogical in her denial of the rights of Ireland, considering she had applauded and helped the Netherlands in a similar struggle. The English had to show that their claim to Ireland was legitimate. A legend had been invented to the effect that Constantine the Great had conferred imperial authority over the British Isles on King Arthur, from whom it descended to Henry VIII. That astute sovereign was glad to take advantage of a theory which fitted in so conveniently with his designs on Scotland and Ireland.^{5a} Spenser, in order to justify the cruel measures adopted towards the Irish in Elizabeth's reign, takes some pains to develop this alleged right. Both in the *View* and in the *Faerie Queene*, he reproduces Holinshed's apocryphal tale of Gurgunt who

^{5a} Pollard, p. 160.

gave to fugitives of Spayne,
Whom he at sea found wandering from their waies,
A seate in Ireland safely to remayne,
Which they should hold of him, as subject to Britayne⁶

And as King Arthur "had all that Iland in his allegeaunce and subjection"⁷ the English claim was, therefore, he implies, much older than the time of Henry II, and thus the awkwardness of a reference to the Bull of Adrian IV, and to Ireland as a Papal fief is avoided.

Coming on to more historic times, Spenser says that the Saxons subdued the realm of Ireland "wholy unto themselves. For first Egfrid, King of Northumberlande, did utterly wast and subdue it. as it appeareth out of Bede his complaynt against him; and afterwarde King Edgar brought it under his obedience, as it appeareth by an auncient record, in which it is found written that he subdued all the Ilands of the North, even unto Norway, and them the King did bring into his subjection." And finally the English under "Earle Strongbowe having conquered that land, delivered up the same unto the handes of Henry the second, then King, whoe sent over thither great store of gentellmen, and other warlick people, amongst whom he distributed the land, and settled such a strong colonye therein, as never could, with all the

⁶ Bk. II, c. x, st. 41.

⁷ *View*, p. 629.

subtill practises of the Irish, be rooted out, but abide still a mighty people, of so many as remayne English of them." And again, elsewhere, he says that when "the Kings of England conquered all the realme they thereby assumed and invested all the right of that land to themselves and their heyres and successours for ever."⁸

But though he was a great poet, Spenser was a bad historian, and his knowledge is frequently superficial and inaccurate. Egfrid King of Northumbria did waste portion of Ireland in 684, and ruined churches and monasteries, as the Venerable Bede complains, but he did not subdue the country. Nor is the Poet more correct in saying that King Edgar brought it under his obedience, for Edgar merely received the submission of some of the Danes of the coast towns.

Spenser does not pretend that the Irish in general acquiesced in any conquest, for, he says, "there be many wide countreyes in Ireland in which the lawes of England were never established, nor any acknowledgment of subjection made," and even the general submission of the chiefs in the time of Henry VIII was, he confesses, disavowed by the people, owing to the law of Tanistry. Solely by right of conquest then they held Ireland, and would continue to hold it. And yet in regard to Hugh O'Neill he contends that conquest gave him

⁸ *View*, p. 659.

no right to the lands he held. The O'Neills, he thinks, or says, had no "auncient segniorye in that countreye," but what they had got "by usurpation and encrochement after the death of the Duke of Clarence :"⁹ "soe that nowe to subdue or expell an usurper, should be noe unjust enterprize nor wrongfull warre, but a restitution of auncient right unto the crown of England, from whence they were most unjustlye expelled and longe kept out."¹⁰ And it is this same inconsistent historian that sheds poetic tears over the wrongs and sufferings of the Ladie Belge, whom a tyrant had deprived of her land

And into moors and marshes banisht had
Out of the pleasant soyle and cities glad
In which she wont to harbour happily.

According to English opinion, the revolt of the Netherlands was laudable, the people were justified in throwing off the foreign yoke of Philip II, securing control over their own government, and establishing their right to practise the religion of their choice. And yet Spenser could not see, or did not want to see, a similarity between the case of Ireland and the case of the Netherlands, though Burghley admitted that the Flemings had not such

⁹ In this connection Spenser makes another mistake, confounding the brother of Edward IV, and the son of Edward III.

¹⁰ *View*, p. 659.

cause to rebel against the oppression of the Spaniards as the Irish had against the tyranny of the English.¹¹ The Irish suffering even greater wrongs, stirred by the same ambition, and taking the same measures to achieve success were, according to the Poet, "vile caitiffs." Thus did Spenser respond to current political thought.

That the Irish might have any rights does not concern this worshipper of British statecraft—the country is to be ruled by England and in the interests of England. As Ireland is a diseased portion of the State, it must first be cured and reformed, before it would be in a position to appreciate good sound laws and the blessings of English civilisation, "for it is vayne to prescribe lawes where noe man careth for keeping them, nor feareth the daunger of breaking them."

The reformation, which is to be "the strength of a greater power," is to be carried out by the sword, which, he explains, does not mean "the cutting of of all that nation with the swoorde, which, far be it from me that I should ever think so desperatly, or wish so uncharitably, but by the swoorde I meane the royall power of the Prince which ought to stretch it self foorth in the cheifest strength to the redressing and cutting of of those evils which I before blamed, and not of the people which are evill. For evill people may be made

¹¹ Froude, Vol. XI., ch. xxvii, p. 250.

goode ; but the evill that is of it self evill will never become good." Following some subtle distinction of his own, the Poet prefers that the Irish should die of famine produced by the English rather than that they should be wiped out by the sword.

In the proposals that Spenser puts forward for the subjugation of Ireland, the influence of Machiavelli on English politics is apparent. The author of *The Prince* was convinced that the essential quality for a successful ruler was strength, and he detailed a policy of vigorous rule, which had for its end efficiency. The safety of his country was his prime concern, and any means that tended towards that end he considered lawful. He is guided not by the principles of natural law but by expediency. Though he was thinking only of the despots of Italy, his theories, like Luther's, had a far-reaching effect, for they were applied to the political systems of all the states of Europe, though the circumstances were not similar. What were intended to be local and purely temporary expedients were adopted by the ruling powers of other countries as rules of permanent and general application. The bold claims of the Tudors accustomed men to this conception of the omnipotent State, and all the special measures that were considered necessary for its preservation were tolerated, as long as it was felt that the need existed. As there was nothing that the State might

not do in its own interests, to an Englishman of the sixteenth century any means, however inhuman, would have been permissible to bring the Irish to subjection. Spenser's plan of starving them would be considered as coldly as it was advocated, and it was not rejected on the score of humanity or of morality, but of expediency. It had been tried by Lord Grey and failed, the English had suffered as well as the Irish, and there was no revenue to be gained out of carcasses and ashes.

Spenser had his own ideas, or Lord Grey's, as to why that policy failed, and one of his favourite theories was that his master had not been permitted to carry out his plan to the bitter end, and he has a special word of warning on that head, so that there should be "noe remorse or drawing backe for the sight of any such rufull objectes as must thereupon followe, nor for compassion of theyr calamityes, seeing that by no other meanes it is possible to recure them, and that these are not of will but of very urgent necessitye."¹² To the poet in himself, the idealist shuddering at the recollection of those pitiful wrecks, the "anatomyes of death," as well as to the public at large, he addresses those stern words. The massacre at Smerwick, the ruin of Munster, the famine, the innumerable butcheries and cruelties are all to be

¹² *View*, p. 654-657.

condoned by the one excuse—there was no other way.

To carry out the reformation of Ireland, Spenser proposes a garrison of 10,000 footmen and 1,000 horse for one year and a half. Of these, 8,000 would be placed so as to keep Hugh O'Neill in subjection, 1,000 would be laid on Feagh MacHugh and the Kavanaghs, and 1,000 would be placed in some part of Connaught. Between these forces the Irish and their cattle would be so hunted and harassed that finally, for want of food, they would shortly want life. Therefore, if they were well hunted for but one winter, there would be little trouble with them the next summer. Twenty days grace were to be allowed before the plan would be put into execution, and those who submitted were to be banished from their homes to some other part of the country, where they would become tenants to Englishmen who would get the lands.¹³ Thus the Irish custom of "dwelling by theyr septs and several nations" would be abolished. When the septs had been broken up, and the people forbidden to use "Oes and Macks" in their names, they would "in shorte time learne quite to forgett this Irish nation."

But though Spenser accepted the idea that in the struggle for existence or for power, the State was justified in abandoning the rules of conduct

¹³ Cf. Machiavelli on Colonies.

that had hitherto prevailed among civilised people, he does not go the length that many of his contemporaries did, and advocate such methods as the assassination of political opponents. In Book VI, canto 7, of the *Faerie Queene*, he rails at such practices as "life for hyre to sell." The cowardly Turpine's proposal to set upon and kill the sleeping Prince Arthur is met with indignant refusal.

Nathelesse, for all his speache the gentle knight
Would not be tempted to such villenie,
Regarding more his faith which he did plight,
All were it to his mortall enemye,
Then to entrap him by false treacherie:
Great shame in lieges blood to be embrew'd!

Perhaps he was thinking of that spirited reply of the Earl of Ormond to the suggestion that he should treacherously seize the "protected" Irish unawares;¹⁴ or of that allegation of broken faith in the Smerwick affair. In his reference to the latter transaction, he is extremely sensitive of the slur cast on the individual honour of the Lord Deputy, though indeed, according to the political code of

¹⁴ "My Lord, the clause in the Queen's letter seems most strange to me. I will never use treachery to any, for it will both touch her highness's honour too much and mine own credit; and whosoever gave the Queen advice thus to write is fitter to execute such base service than I am. Saving my duty to her Majesty I would I were to have revenge by my sword of any man that thus persuaded the Queen to write to me."—(Ormond to Burghley, Sept. 10th, 1583.)

the time, Grey would have been quite justified in breaking faith with an enemy. But both the Deputy and his secretary were Puritans, who would be unlikely to accept the Machiavellian system in its entirety. Even when he is the stony-hearted politician of the *View*, Spenser never advocates underhand methods. Brute force, naked and unashamed is his policy, and he seems to have been genuinely opposed to the craft, temporising, and deceit that he found in politicians. He ascribes the same feelings to Lord Grey in his answer to the argument

To temporize is not from truth to swerve,
 Ne for advantage terme to entertaine,
 When as necessitie doth it constraine.
 'Fie on such forgerie!' (sayd Artegall),
 'Under one hood to shadow faces twaine:
 Knights ought be true, and truth is one in all:
 Of all things, to dissemble, fouly may befall.'*

The reformation of Ireland being completed, religion was the next thing that should claim attention, for the care of the souls as well as of the bodies "lyeth upon the Prince." But as "it is an ill time to preache amongst Swoordes," the correction of religious abuses should be deferred till peace be restored. Spenser believes in uniformity of religion, yet "thus much is needful

* *F.Q.*, Bk. V, c. xi.
 (D 678)

to be observed that it be not sought forcebly to be impressed into them with terrou and sharpe penalties, as nowe is the manner, but rather delivered and intimated with mildeness and gentleness, soe as it may not be hated afore it be understood, and theyr Professors dispised and rejected." The prejudice that had grown up generally against religious persecution explains his giving expression to such tolerant views. Spenser was doubtless influenced by Jean Bodin whose work, *De la République*, was at this time in use at Cambridge for lectures in political science. Bodin preached toleration, though not as a matter of duty but of expediency.

But even apart from this new spirit of toleration, Spenser was no religious bigot,¹⁵ and Catholicism, with its ancient traditions, and the splendour and dignity of its ceremonies, made a strong appeal to the poet in him. But while his heart turned to the ancient religion, he could not overcome his political fear of the Papacy, so that though he treats the doctrines and ritual of Catholicism with reverence and admiration, he is as whole-hearted in his attacks on the Papacy as any of his contemporaries, even if he does not descend to the same depths of vulgar abuse.

In the laws of Ireland, or rather of Anglo-Ireland, the Poet does not propose to make any

¹⁵ *View*, pp. 645, 679.

drastic changes, as that would lead merely to trouble and confusion. The Brehon Law would, of course, be abolished. He shows no understanding of the Irish law system, and he discusses it as he discusses Irish poetry and the Irish system of land tenure, out of his ignorance. Like so many of his countrymen he could see nothing admirable in the institutions of a foreign country, if they were at variance with the English practice. The Brehon Law was by no means what Spenser asserts it was—simply a contrivance for the composition of felonies, under a show of equity.¹⁶ He deals with only one feature of the code, the *eric* or composition payment for murder. Such awards to the relatives of the murdered person were at one period the English custom likewise, but Spenser is either ignorant of that fact or wilfully ignores it. Certainly an Englishman who did not know the origin of the English code of laws, and asserted that they were brought from Normandy by William I cannot be considered well-informed, and has no claim to be regarded as a reliable guide when dealing with either the history or the law system of a foreign country. Though he may have been, and often is, a keen and accurate observer, his air of assured wisdom frequently hides the fact that he misinterpreted the meaning of what he saw, and that he did not take the trouble to

¹⁶ *View*, p. 610-11.

ascertain the truth, but rather accepted the malicious opinions of previous English writers. There is plenty of evidence of the respect in which the native code was held. It was the growth of centuries, and was suited to the needs of the people. Moreover, even in early times, it had behind it the force of popular consent. To infer that there was no conception of crime as crime, and that the Irish had never learned obedience to law is false, and can be contradicted by ancient, mediæval and contemporary evidence. In the reign of Henry VIII, Chief Baron Finglas complained of the English of the Pale that they did not observe the laws and statutes eight days after the making of them, "which matter is one of the destructions of Englishmen of this land ; and divers Irishmen doth observe and keep such laws and statutes which they make upon hills in their country firm and stable, without breaking them for any favour or reward." Dealing with this reverence of the people for justice, Prof. MacNeill points out "we have the most remarkable testimony borne by Englishmen in Ireland at the time when Irish law was on the verge of abolition. And one of these writers aptly says that nothing that the Irishman does, however praiseworthy, finds favour with a set of men who are his professional traducers."¹⁷ For this traditional law sanctioned by consent, a foreign legal system for which the

¹⁷ *Phases of Irish History*, p. 319.

Irish had no desire and little respect was substituted.

From his reformed Ireland, Spenser would also banish Irish customs, Irish dress, and the Irish language, according to the old policy dating back to the Statute of Kilkenny. Marrying with the natives and fostering—"two most dangerous infections"—should be strictly prohibited. Yet he is aware that all laws have hitherto failed to stamp out these "infections." He voices the official opinion that such marriages could not but bring forth an evil race, "seeing that commonly the child taketh most of his nature of the mother, besides speache, manners and inclination, which are (for the most part) agreeable to the conditions of theyr mothers." Fortunately the future was hidden from him and he did not know that his heir, disregarding the parental warning, would marry a Catholic Irishwoman.¹⁸ But in working out his expatriation scheme the Poet himself seems to ignore the charms of the Irish maidens and the danger of propinquity, and he falls into one of the many inconsistencies that are to be found in his works. "And, therefore, nowe," he says, "since Ireland is full of her owne nation that may not be rooted out, and somewhat stored with English all-readye, and more to be, I think it best by an union of manners, and conformitye of myndes to bring

¹⁸ The law would have called her one of the Old English, as the Nagles came over with Strongbow.

them to be one people, and to putt away the dislikeful conceit both of the one, and the other which wil by noe meanes better then by this entermingling of them."¹⁹

Towards the social problems of the day too, Spenser had the ordinary attitude of his countrymen. The development of the theory of autocracy led to a subversion of the democratic ideas of the Middle Ages, and one of the effects of the Renaissance and the Reformation was a return to a pagan and anti-Christian contempt for the common people. Spenser imbibed all the ideas of the gentlefolk with whom he was thrown, and he despised the "rascal rout." With the disappearance of the monasteries went the old kindly feelings for the poor and unfortunate. Success in life, not poverty, became the mark of Divine Love, and the sign of salvation hereafter. According to the Puritan doctrine of predestination there was no such thing as equality possible, hence the Poet's scathing attack on democracy and its aspirations, personified in the Giant with the balance.²⁰

Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland*, though not original, formed a useful compendium of coercive measures for the use of such exponents of ruthlessness as Cromwell, who, when he offered the Irish the alternative of Hell or Connaught, was

¹⁹ *View*, p. 675.

²⁰ *F.Q.*, Bk. V, canto ii.

carrying out the deportation scheme advocated by Spenser. Mountjoy in the war with Hugh O'Neill, and James I in his Plantation policy, no doubt owed something to the counsels embodied in the *View*. Though not actually printed till 1633, after Sir James Ware's discovery of the Dublin copy in Archbishop Ussher's Library, the fact that four manuscript copies of it are still in existence would go to prove that it had a considerable circulation in manuscript form. Milton, that careful student of Spenser's poetry, also studied the *View*, for he has made two notes from it in his *Common Book*—one, "The wicked policies of divers deputies and governours in Ireland"; and the other, "The consideration of Provision for soldiers after the wars."²¹

From a man of Spenser's genius one would have expected some original and broad-minded contribution to this question of the relations between England and Ireland, but "he found England prejudiced he confirmed her, he found Ireland miserable he plunged her still deeper in the gulf."²² Even taking into consideration that he wrote at a time when racial animosity was highly inflamed, it must be conceded that not alone does he show a strongly biassed judgment, but that in his efforts to follow official opinion, he becomes more severe than many of his

²¹ *Common Place Book*, p. 35 (Camden Society).

²² *Dublin Review*, 1844.

contemporaries, for he denies to the Irish even the virtues accorded to them by some of the other Englishmen resident in Ireland. While, for instance he makes allegations as to the contempt shown in Ireland for the law, and the perjury common among jurors, Robert Payne, another settler, says, of that same class from whom the jurors were drawn, "the better sorte are very civill and honestly given." And again—"They are obedient to the laws, so that you may travel through all the land, without any danger or injurie offered of the very worst Irish, and be greatly relieved of the best." The Poet omits too when dealing with this question of juries, to mention the action of his own patron, who sat on the bench at Chief Justice Nugent's trial, "to see justice more equally ministered."²³ Nor has he any word of blame for such methods as Sir Richard Bingham's, who, taking a juror by the beard, threatened to inflict on him the punishment of a traitor if he persisted in his opinion.²⁴

But Spenser was not always consistent, and the refutation of his slanders is often to be found in his own writings. He professed to believe that the Irish had an utter disregard for the sworn word, yet he proposes that the noblemen should all take an oath of allegiance to Elizabeth. It is to be regretted that he allowed himself to be blinded by prejudice,

²³ Bagwell, Vol. III, p. 100.

²⁴ *C.S.P. Ir.* (1588-92), p. 127.

that he used his great gifts unworthily, that in his effort to defend Elizabethan policy in Ireland he ignored or palliated the wrongs done to this people among whom his lot was cast. But time brings its revenges, and some of his own family went the usual way of the settlers' descendants, imbibed Irish ideas, and became in turn objects of suspicion to the English government. By the irony of fate, his grandson, William Spenser, was one of the victims of his political advice,²⁵ for part of the Poet's grant was given for a time to Cromwellian soldiers, as will be shown when we follow the fortunes of his descendants.

²⁵ *View*, p. 622.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE POET'S DESCENDANTS

IT has sometimes been conjectured that Elizabeth Boyle was not the Poet's first wife. We do not know if he married that second Rosalindula that Harvey in his Latin letter calls "mea Domina Immerito, mea bellissima Collina Clouta," nor have we any information that would explain his reference in the *Daphnaida*, to himself as

One, whome like wofulnesse, impressed deepe,
Hath made fit mate thy wretched case to heare,
And given like cause with thee to waile and weepe.

As far as official records show there were three children born to Edmund Spenser—Catherine, Sylvanus, and Peregrine. Ben Jonson stated that a new-born infant was burned in the sack of Kilcolman. He is the sole authority for the assertion. Neither the Poet himself nor any of the family has left any mention of such an occurrence, nor is there any reference to it in any of the contemporary accounts of the flight of the Undertakers.

We cannot say if Elizabeth Boyle was the mother of these three children. Catherine is never

mentioned in connection with the property, nor with Elizabeth. If there was a previous marriage, she may have been the child of that union.

Considering the plight of those who had sought refuge in Cork, the wife and children would have gone to London with the Poet on that last journey, as there they could have got help from friends. There is evidence that Sylvanus and Peregrine were brought up in England, probably by their father's relations, but the mother returned to Ireland, and is mentioned in the list of Undertakers for the year 1600—1601.¹ Almost all that is known of her subsequent relations with the sons is gleaned from old law-suits.

In March, 1601, the Privy Council presented to Sir George Carew, Lord President of Munster, a petition on behalf of the widow and children of Edmund Spenser "in regard he was a servitor of that realme,"² though at the time Elizabeth Boyle had married again, as shown by a deed of feoffment granted on August 20th, 1600, of Rennybrough, and the rectories of Athnowen, Kilbride, Kilbrogane, Kilmainane, Agneholtie, etc., parcels of the Abbey of Grany in Munster, "to the use of Roger Seckerton and his wife, with rem' to Peregrine Spencer in tail male, with rem' to Roger Spencer

¹ *Salisbury MSS*, pt. xi, p. 95.

² *Car. Cal.* (1601-1603), p. 35.

and wife, with rem' to the right heirs of Edmund Spencer for ever.'"³

Of Roger Seckerstone nothing is known. In view of the above deed it seems probable that the newly-married couple lived at Renny Castle. The residence at Kilcolman had been destroyed, but the title deeds were in the possession of the Poet's widow. In 1603 Sylvanus, as heir to the estates, addressed a petition to the Chancellor of Ireland, suing for the recovery of the documents. He was then aged about eight years, and the action would have been brought by his guardians. The petition runs thus:—"Whereas your Petitioner's father Edmund Spenser was seized in his demesne in ffee of Kyllcolman and divers other lands and tenements in the county of Corke, which descended to your petitioner by the death of his said father, so it is right honorable, the evidences of the sayd inheritance did after the decease of petitioner's father cum to the hands of Roger Seckerstone and petitioners mother which they unjustly detayneth; which evidences forasmuch as your petitioner can have no accion at comon lawe, he not knowing their dates and certainty, he is dryven to sue in consideracion byfore your Honourable Lordship, and avoweth that the said Roger Seckerstone, his mouthers now husband, unjustly detayneth the said evidences, to

³ *Ferguson MSS*, I, p. 74. Quoted from Brady, Vol. II, p. 260.

your petitioners damage of one hundred pounds, where in he prays remedy.”⁴

The petition must have been successful, for in the List of names of Undertakers of Munster resident in England, at the end of 1603, “ the heir of Edmund Spenser ” appears.⁵

On the death of the Poet the heriot and reliefs laid down in his patent were not paid. On the 19th of June, 1605, a writ was issued from the Exchequer Court directing the Sheriff of the county of Cork to make known to the heirs of Edmund Spenser and all the tenants and possessors of his estates that they should appear in the Exchequer in the following Michaelmas term to show why they should not be charged with the “ principal beasts and reliefs ” which are reserved in his patent ; and accordingly the Sheriff distrained the Poet’s heir and occupier of his estates, Sylvanus Spenser, by his bailiffs, Peter Dyllon and Thomas Howard.⁶ In Michaelmas term of the same year the Court ordered the Sheriff to seize the manor, castle, town and lands of Kilcolman into the king’s hands ; and this was accordingly done.⁷ On Friday, January 31st, 1606, Sylvanus appeared upon that writ of seizure, and upon the 4th of February following, the Court ordered him to pay his rent and heriot,

⁴ Original Petition destroyed in P.R.O., Dublin. Quoted from Grosart, p. 556-7.

⁵ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1603-1606), p. 116.

⁶ Memorandum Roll, 3 James I, mem. 39. Grosart, p. 558.

⁷ Same record, mem. 52.

and granted him a supersedeas of that writ. He appeared in Court on Saturday, June 28th, 1606, and tendered £8 2s. 11d. due by a recognisance for the last payment of £16 5s. 10d. "for his heriot and relief upon the death of his father Edmund Spenser, for his lands holden of his Majesty in fee farm."

From a further Exchequer record we learn that at this time Sylvanus was engaged in legal proceedings with Sir Allen Apsloe, knight, and John Power of Doneraile, as to the lands of Carrigeen and Ardadam, which Apsloe claimed as being part of Doneraile, and not of Kilcolman, as contended for Sylvanus Spenser.⁸ There seems to be no record of the result of this dispute, and the next mention of the property is in a State Paper of 1611, where Sylvanus is entered as possessing "a fourth of the seignory of Kilcolman granted to Edmund Spenser." He was still an absentee apparently, for it is also there stated, under the heading, Breaches of the Articles of Plantation: "The Undertaker has no demesnes, nor dwells on the land. Most of the undertenants are mere Irish." The reserved rent is stated to be £19 10s., of which £4 15s. had been abated, and the rent now payable is £14 5s. 10d.⁹

In the meantime Spenser's Elizabeth had again

⁸ Grosart, pp. 558, 559.

⁹ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1611-14), p. 221.

become a widow, as we learn from the following entry in the Council Book of the Corporation of Youghal :—¹⁰

Seckerstone.

This Indenture made iij May, 1606, between Sir Richard Boyle, ffermore, of the New Colledge of Our Ladie of Yoghull on th' one parte and Elizabeth Boyle als Seckerstone, of Kilcoran, in the countie of Corcke, widow, on th' other parte, Witnesseth that ye saide Sir Richard Boyle hath sett to ye saide Elizabeth Boyle, als Seckerstone from the ffeast of Saint Michell next ensueing for lxj yeares, the capitall messuage, etc., of Kilcoran. Yieldinge and payinge for the same to ye said Sir Richard Boyle, in the hall of the New Colledge, etc., of Yoghull the sum of ijs. 6d, yearlie.

In witness, etc. Richard Boyle.

Present Robert Calvert.

Recordatur ad instantiam Henrici Tynte arm. et Richardi Smith arm., 6 Maij, 1648.

From this document, supplemented by further evidence from the *Lismore Papers*,¹¹ where Peregrine Spenser and Richard Seckerstone are both mentioned as sons of this same Elizabeth Boyle, Dr. Grosart established the identity of Spenser's wife. Some other inferences, however, which he draws from this same document do not

¹⁰ *Liber A.*, p. 600.

¹¹ Second series, Vol. III, p. 79.

seem to be so well founded. Dr. Grosart assumes that the Kilcoran here referred to is the land belonging to the old Augustinian Abbey, said to have been situated about one mile to the south of Youghal, and about a mile inland from Claycastle.¹² At the same time he is of opinion that Kilcoran Woods, connected with Spenser's wooing must be in the barony of Condons and Clongibbons.¹³ Sir Richard Boyle made a good deal of money out of Irish timber, and he took a lease of this Kilcoran property, which lies between the Bride River and the Blackwater, from one Edmund Mac Shaine,¹⁴ and proceeded to cut down the woods.¹⁵ He let the house on the land to his cousin for a nominal rent, when she had become a widow for the second time. There is no evidence to show that it was ever her old home.¹⁶ Of the Youghal Kilcoran there is no mention in connection with Sir Richard Boyle.

In 1612, Elizabeth Boyle, who had formerly so cherished her liberty,¹⁷ married a third time. Sir

¹² Hayman : *Memorials of Youghal*, p. 29.

¹³ *Lismore Papers*, Vol. I, Introduction.

¹⁴ *Lismore Papers*, Second series, Vol. I, p. 223.

¹⁵ Philip Cottingham's *Report*, 1608.

¹⁶ This Kilcoran, which is close to the Cork-Waterford border, was part of the lands granted to Thomas Fleetwood. He did not succeed in gaining possession, as the reversal of Patrick Condon's attainder complicated matters and led to a long dispute. In 1611, Thomas Fleetwood's son, Richard, complained to the king that the lands granted by Queen Elizabeth to his father were wrongfully withheld from him, and enjoyed by Sir Richard Boyle, Condon and others. (C. Pat. Rolls, Eliz., p. 131, mem. 27 : *C.S.P. Ir.*, 1608-10, p. 582 : *C.S.P. Ir.* 1611-14, p. 27.)

¹⁷ Sonnet lxxv.

Richard Boyle records in his diary this marriage to Captain Robert Tynt. It took place in his study at Youghal.¹⁸ This Captain Tynt, the builder of Tynt's Castle, later became Sir Robert Tynt, and Elizabeth Boyle died "the Lady Tynt," August 23rd, 1622,¹⁹ leaving as a bequest to be equally divided between her two sons, Peregrine Spenser and Richard Seckerstone, the sum of £100.²⁰ Hers was the more matronly of the two figures on the Tynt monument formerly at Kilcredan, near Castlemartyr, Co. Cork, but now destroyed.

Before this time Sylvanus must have returned to live in Ireland. He married one of the nine daughters of David Nagle of Monanimmy,²¹ who also had the castle of Ballinamona, which was on the east of the Spenser lands. Tradition says they lived at Ballygriffin, near Killavullen. Evidently the residence at Kilcolman had been ruined past repair.

It is difficult to tell what was the extent of the estate actually enjoyed by Sylvanus Spenser. The original grant was not intact, as has already been seen. Among the Roche MSS. in the British Museum is the following grant of property not mentioned in the patent. It is under the hand and seal of Edmund Spenser.

¹⁸ *Lismore Papers*, First Series,, Vol. I, p. 8.

¹⁹ *Perregreene Spenser v. Francis Marshall*, 1622.

²⁰ *Lismore Papers*, Second Series, Vol. III, p. 79.

²¹ Nagle Pedigree in possession of Garrett Nagle, Esq., Byblos, Co. Cork.

(D 678)

" Be it knowen to all men by these presents I,
 Edmund Spenser of Kilcolman, esq., doe give unto
 McHenry the keping of all the wards wch. I have
 in Ballyganim & of the rushes and brakes wt out
 making any spoyle thereof, & also doe covenant
 wt him that he shall have one house wt in the
 baun of Richardston for him self & cattell in
 tyme of warre. And also wt in the space of vii.
 years to repayre the castle of Richardston afore
 said, and in all other ways to use good neighbor
 hood to him & his.

Ed. Spenser.^{'122}

In the Rolls Office, Dublin, was preserved both the petition of Sylvanus Spenser and the subsequent findings of the commission held at Mallow, on August 7th, 1611, regarding the two ploughlands Ballyellis-Ardgilbert and Ardadam (600 acres approximately). The document confirms the acquiring of these lands from Edmund Spenser by Nicholas Shyname, before the Commissioners for the Province of Munster. Accordingly, an abatement of rent of £6 6s. 8d. was granted to Sylvanus Spenser.²³ That these lands passed into the possession of the Synan family is further confirmed

²² Quoted, *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. VIII, p. 234. This McHenry was a junior member of the Roche family who assumed the name of McHenry that he might be chief of his name. Ballyganim was the old name of the land on which the castle stood. The site is one mile to the west of Doneraile, and four from Kilcolman.

²³ This is evidently a confirmation of the findings of the lawsuit of 1592, though the abatement then granted was only £4 15s.

by a document among the *Doneraile Court Papers*, which enumerates the lands that Sir William St. Leger, Lord President of Munster bought from the Synan family in 1636. Among them are to be found Ballyellis Ardgilbert, Ardadam and Carrigines.²⁴

With regard to Carrigeens, the Inquisition states : "John Power of Doneraile doth witholde the ploughland and half of Carrigyns and Keylme Enyth [Killmaceness] containing 300 acres or thereabouts, by what title we know not." Sylvanus had no abatement of rent for these 300 acres.²⁵

Sylvanus Spenser died in 1636, leaving two sons Edmund and William. On February 18th, 1638, a fee farm grant was made to his heir, Edmund, of the lands of Kilcolman, apparently to remedy defective titles.²⁶

It is generally taken for granted that the remainder of the Poet's writings were destroyed in the burning of Kilcolman. There is a tradition in the district to the effect that some Spenser manuscripts were lost in a shipwreck by one of the Nagle family, who was going abroad to serve in Germany. Captain Garrett Nagle, brother of Sylvanus's wife must have been the person indicated, for such an adventure did befall him when going to join the

²⁴ Quoted *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. XIX, topographical notes, by Col. Grove White, p. 43.

²⁵ This may account for the rise in the abatement to £6 6s. 8d.

²⁶ Grosart, p. 560.

army of the Emperor Ferdinand, in whose service he died.²⁷ It is possible that Sylvanus, or his widow, did actually entrust him with some precious manuscripts. As the elder Spenser's widow had the title deeds, some of the other papers may also have been saved.

But it is time to refer to the Poet's second son, Peregrine. What we know of him before he came to Ireland is gathered from the *Lismore Papers*. Sir Richard Boyle seems to have been interested in him, and Peregrine corresponded fairly regularly with the Great Earl. In 1616, he writes a pathetic letter complaining of ill-health, and asking his kinsman to put him in the way of making his living.²⁸ He continued in straitened circumstances and Boyle sent him on three subsequent occasions, a gift of £5. These payments are recorded in the *Lismore Papers* under the dates May 15th and November 30th, 1618, and March 18th, 1619.

After Lady Tynt's death in 1622, Peregrine started law proceedings against one Francis Marshall. The bill is dated "Julie 9th, 1622," but it was not filed till January 14th, 1623. The date of his mother's death, August 23rd, is given in the bill, a curious fact to be accounted for by the endorsement: "This Bill with the answer thereunto filed were both delivered by James Browne

²⁷ Nagle pedigree.

²⁸ *Lismore Papers*, Second Series, Vol. II, p. 139-140.

unto me the 14th daie of Januarie, 1622, he gave unto me 12d. for the filing of them, and wanted me to enter the Bill in my Ld. Chancellor's name the 9th of Julie, 1622, because it concerned the Ld. Chancellor." The statement of claim sets out that the plaintiff is son and heir to Edmond Spencer, late of Kilcolman, deceased, and goes on to show that Sir William Sarsfield of Lucan, and Sir Garrett Aylmer, by their deeds of August 24th, 1600, granted certain lands and impropriate tithes in trust for the use of Roger Seckerstone and Elizabeth his wife; that these lands had been bought by Edmond Spencer, who had paid all the purchase money, except £25, which with £25 more, £50 in all, had been satisfied after the death of Edmond Spencer by Roger Seckerstone, who married the widow Elizabeth, plaintiff's mother. Peregrine goes on to state that these lands were intended by his father for his (Peregrine's) use.²⁹—a contention that is borne out by the deed of feoffment already quoted. There seems to be no explanation as to why he had made no previous claim to his patrimony.

Evidently the proceedings here mentioned did not end the matters in dispute between Peregrine Spenser and Francis Marshall, for there was another Chancery suit brought by Peregrine on

²⁹ Quoted *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. 28, p. 25.

May 15th, 1626.³⁰ From this we learn that this second son of the Poet married Dorothy Tynt, a daughter of Sir Robert Tynt, obviously by his first wife. She afterwards married one named Morres or Maurice,³¹ for Peregrine died in the king's service in the first year of the rebellion, leaving four children,³² of whom the eldest Hugolin inherited his estates.

Of the Poet's daughter, Catherine, nothing definite is known, beyond the fact that she married William Wiseman of Bandonbridge,³³ the Escheator for the County Cork. She probably made his acquaintance through Sir Richard Boyle, who was deputy escheator.³⁴ The Wisemans owned Kilbeg Castle, halfway between Innishannon and Bandon. Here Catherine lived and died.³⁵ She was dead by 1635, for on October 31st of that year her husband married again.³⁶ This only daughter of the Poet lies buried at Kilbrogan. It is probable that there were no children of the marriage, as none are mentioned in William Wiseman's will.

Lawrence Spenser of Bandon, whose will, dated

³⁰ *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. 28. Originals destroyed.

³¹ She is described in the *Commonwealth Book* as Dorothy Tynt, als. Spencer, als. Morres.

³² Evidence of Hugolin Spencer and Ellinor, his wife,, before Commissioners for the Settlement of Ireland, Nov. 6th, 1663.

³³ Funeral entries in Ulster Herald's Office, Dublin—attestation of Sir Robert Travers.

³⁴ *C.S.P.Ir.* (1596-97), p. 76.

³⁵ Bennett's *History of Bandon*, p. 168.

³⁶ *Lismore Papers*, First Series.

August 29th, 1653, was in the Public Records Office, Dublin, was said to have been a son of the Poet,³⁷ but there is no authority to support the assertion. There is no mention of him in connection with any relative of the Poet, and he does not refer to any member of the family in his will.

To trace the subsequent history of Spenser's descendants in full would be a tedious and profitless task, it is sufficient to mention the fate of those that inherited the property. Two of them had interesting careers.

Sylvanus's son and heir, Edmund, met with a tragic death in Dublin on August 28th, 1640, when returning from Munster. He was thrown from his horse and broke his neck. He was buried beside his maternal grandfather, David Nangle, in St. James's Churchyard, Dublin.³⁸ Dying without issue, he was succeeded in the Kilcolman estate by his brother William, then only six years old. As Ellen Nangle was a Catholic the children were brought up in that faith, and consequently when Catholic estates were being divided among English soldiers after the Rebellion, Captain Courthope and his troops got portion of the Spenser lands. In this way Kilcolman, Lisnamucky and Knocknamaddery were lost in 1654—land amounting to 1,599 acres. But William Spenser made a successful appeal to

³⁷ Bennett's *History of Bandon*, p. 168.

³⁸ Recorded by Henry Smithwicke, *Lismore Papers*, Second Series.

the Lord Protector Cromwell, who wrote on March 27th, 1657, on his behalf the following letter from Whitehall to the Council of Ireland :—

“ To our Trusty and Right well-Beloved, Our Council in Ireland.

“ A petition hath been exhibited unto us by William Spenser, setting forth that being but seven years old at the beginning of the rebellion in Ireland he repaired with his mother (his father being then dead) to the City of Cork, and during the Rebellion continued in the English quarters. That he never bore arms, or acted against the commonwealth of England. That his grandfather, Edmund Spenser, and his father were both Protestants, from whom an estate of land in the barony of Fermoy in the county of Cork, descended on him, which during the rebellion yielded him little or nothing towards his relief. That the said estate hath been lately given out to the soldiers in satisfaction of their arrears, only upon the account of his professing the Popish religion, which since his coming to years of discretion he hath, as he professes, utterly renounced. That his grandfather was that Spenser who, by his writings touching the reduction of the Irish to civility, brought on him the odium of that nation, and for these Works, and his other good services, Queen Elizabeth conferred on him the estate which the said William Spenser now claims. We have also been informed that the gentleman is of civil conversation, and that the extremity his wants have brought him to have not prevailed over him to put him upon indirect or evil practices for a livelihood.

And if, upon inquiry, you shall find his case to be such, we judge it just and reasonable, and do therefore desire and authorize you that he be forthwith restored to his estate, and that reprisal lands be given to the soldiers elsewhere; in the doing whereof our satisfaction will be greater by the continuation of that estate to the issue of his grandfather, for whose eminent deserts and services to the Commonwealth that estate was first given to him.

“ We rest,

Your loving friend,

‘ Oliver P. ’ ’’³⁹

The Council accordingly issued a decree on July 26th, 1657, and a final settlement August 11th, 1657,⁴⁰ by which he was awarded 1,011 acres in Connaught, mainly in the neighbourhood of Ballinasloe, in exchange for the part of his lands in Co. Cork, that had been given to soldiers. Cromwell, in addition, made him a lease of the tithes in the Co. Galway, as shown in the list of pensions in Cromwell's Court List Establishment.⁴¹ The acquirement of this western property brought him in contact with his future wife, Barbara Edwards, whom he married in 1658. She was the daughter of William Edwards of Loughrea, Co. Galway, an Englishman. She was a well-dowered lady, and brought him certain lands as her marriage

³⁹ Original in *Commonwealth Book*, A/28 (P.R.O.), *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. 28.

⁴⁰ *Ormonde MSS*, Vol. II, p. 175.

⁴¹ *C. H. & A. Jour.*, Vol. 14, p. 39.

portion, so that eventually the western estate equalled almost 2,000 acres, as shown by a royal grant dated July 31st, 1678, of the lands in the counties of Galway and Roscommon. Ballinasloe was part of Barbara Edwards' dowry, and she and her husband resided there at times. Eventually he recovered the Kilcolman lands.⁴²

Meantime, over at Renny, his cousin Hugolin was also going through a time of tribulation. He too was a Catholic. The estate was impoverished by the Rebellion, just as the Kilcolman estate was, and to make matters worse, he and his wife were dispossessed by Cromwell, though they were afterwards restored as Innocent Papists (Decree of Innocence in Exchequer of Ireland, Roll XI, membrane 34).⁴³

In the war of 1689-91, Hugolin and his cousin William took opposite sides. Hugolin must have become a "degenerate" Englishman, for he took the side of James and the Irish, while William took the side of the Prince of Orange, and acted as guide to Ginkel's army, as it marched south from Athlone. Reprisals from the Irish quickly followed his action, and he lost 300 head of black cattle, and 1,500 sheep, his houses were plundered and burnt, his family ill-treated, and his only son wounded in twenty places by the Irish army. Such was

⁴² Grosart, p. 561.

⁴³ Grosart, p. 564.

William's complaint in a subsequent petition presented in London.⁴⁴ Hugolin was outlawed on the 11th of June by Act of 3rd William and Mary, for high treason at Mallow, as was found by an Inquisition taken at the King's Old Castle, Cork, August 15th, 1694, and William as "next Protestant heire" claimed the forfeited estates, "in consideration of his services, sufferings and losses in the late trouble in Ireland." On receipt of this petition it was reported that the said estate was of the clear yearly value of £67 17s. 6d., above all quit and Crown rents and incumbrances, and that the Petitioner deserved the King's grace and favour, in consequence of his said services and losses; accordingly the King granted the estate of Hugolin to William Spenser, by letter dated 23rd of April, 1697,⁴⁵ but by a letter of June 14th, 1697, the estate was granted to Nathaniell Spenser, gentleman, son of the said William. This property consisted of Renny and the Church lands already mentioned. (Communia Roll of the Exchequer, 1695 to 1697.)⁴⁶

A subsequent Act of Parliament made void all these grants in Ireland, and the forfeited estates were vested in Trustees to be sold for the benefit of the public. William Spenser, being ill at the

⁴⁴ Case of William Spenser, of Kilcolman, Co. Cork, Esq. Brit. Museum. Quoted in full, Todd, Vol. I.

⁴⁵ Rolls Office, Ireland.

⁴⁶ Grosart, p. 562.

time of the passing of this Act, was unable to apply for a saving clause, and was in consequence dispossessed by the Trustees.⁴⁷ It was therefore necessary for him to go to London to recover this estate. He there met the poet Congreve, who introduced him to Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax. With the help of Montague, then head of the Treasury, the grant was ratified⁴⁸ by a private Act of Parliament to be found in the Records of the House of Lords.⁴⁹

But the Rinny estate had been mortgaged by Hugolin Spenser in 1673 to Pierce Power the elder (his daughter's father-in-law) for the sum of £300 and £20 per annum interest, and William and his son Nathaniel had mortgaged all their lands on December 24th, 1697, for £2,100. Accordingly when William Spenser died in April, 1713,⁵⁰ the estates were much embarrassed, and Nathaniel was forced to sell part of them. On February 26th, 1716, Ballinasloe was sold to Frederick Trench, ancestor of the Earl of Clancarty,⁵¹ and other portions followed. In 1738, a mortgage of £2,000 on the lands of Kilcolman, etc., which had evidently been recovered, was in the hands of Elizabeth, Lady

⁴⁷ Case of William Spenser.

⁴⁸ Gibson : *History of Cork*, Vol. I, p. 310.

⁴⁹ I. Anne, No. 97.

⁵⁰ Chancery Bill : *Spencer v. Spencer*, Dec. 6th, 1716.

⁵¹ Grosart, p. 563.

Meade, widow of Sir Richard Meade,⁵² and in that year all the remainder of the original grant of Queen Elizabeth to the Poet seems to have passed from the hands of his descendants, and the direct male line of the impoverished family appears to have become extinct in the latter half of the century.

If Spenser, endowed with poetic vision, could have looked into the years and seen the ruin of that posterity that was to possess the earth with lasting happiness,⁵³ he would have felt still more how Mutabilitie plays her cruel sports in the life of man, and have grown to

loath this state of life so tickle,
And love of things so vain to cast away;
Whose flowring pride, so fading and so fickle,
Short time shall soon cut down with his consuming
sickle.

⁵² Exchequer Bill: *Spencer v. Mead*, Nov. 18th, 1738. *C. H. & A. Jour.*, vol. 28, p. 55. Sir Richard Meade was a relation, being a great-grandson of Sarah Spenser. Her son, Sir Robert Travers, had a daughter Elizabeth, who married Sir John Meade. (Brady.)

⁵³ *Epithalamium*.

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- C.H. & A. Jour.* = *Journal of Cork Historical and Archaeological Society.*
Car. Cal. = *Calendar of Carew Manuscripts.*
C.S.P. Dom. = *Calendar of Domestic State Papers.*
C.S.P. Ir. = *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland.*
C.S.P. Scot. = *Calendar of Scottish State Papers.*
C.S.P. Sp. = *Calendar of Spanish State Papers.*
Lib. Hib. = *Liber Munerum Publicorum Hiberniæ.*
Jour. Roy. Soc. Antiq. = *Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.*
Murdin = *State Papers of Lord Burghley.*

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